

## Nonlitigation Advocacy Summary

Updated on October 31, 2021

Americans United is contacted every day by individuals across the country who have been subjected to, or have witnessed, constitutional violations in their communities. Believing that many of these matters are best resolved without litigation, in mid-1998 we launched a vigorous campaign to remedy violations by nonadversarial means. The members of our legal department engage in informal advocacy—through letter-writing, telephone calls, and, on occasion, representation of individuals in noncourtroom settings—in an effort to remedy First Amendment violations and to educate school officials, legislators, and others about constitutional requirements. We are successful in the majority of our efforts; and our legal department is equipped to file suit in those cases in which informal advocacy proves ineffective. The full report of our nonlitigation efforts since June 1998 appears below.

### 2021

**AU warns school about athletic coach’s plans to restart unconstitutional religious activities with students - October 2021, Mason, MI:** AU received a complaint about a high-school coach who hosted Bible-study sessions for his team and gave out religion-themed shirts at the end-of-year banquet for the team. The school had instructed him to stop doing this, but in the new school year his social media posts indicated that he was planning to restart these activities. AU wrote to school-district officials to alert them to these posts and to ask that they ensure that the coach did not resume his religious activities with students. The district spoke to the coach about his plans and reiterated to him that he was not to engage in religious activities with students while functioning in his official capacity.

**No more prayer at park openings thanks to AU letter - October 2021, Buffalo, NY:** The Erie County Parks and Recreation Department included an official prayer during the opening of a new dog park. AU wrote to the Department to explain that the inclusion of prayer at official government activities was a violation of the separation of church and state and to ask that the practice be stopped. An attorney for the Department informed us that this would not happen again.

**Americans United letter ends public-school employee practice of including Bible quotations in official emails - October 2021, Independence, MO:** Americans United received a complaint that a public-school employee ended official emails with a quote from the Bible. We wrote a letter to the school district to explain that it is unconstitutional to include religious content in official communications. The district responded that it had

instituted a new policy that required official emails to use a template—one that did not include Bible verses.

**Charter-school principal stops including Bible quotes in official emails after**

**Americans United letter - October 2021, Brooklyn, NY:** Americans United received a complaint about the principal of a public charter school including a Bible quote in his official emails. We wrote to the school to explain that this behavior is unconstitutional and to ask that the principal engaging in it. We did not receive an official response, but we have learned that the behavior has stopped.

**AU stops public-school teacher from playing religious music in class and**

**discussing God with students - October 2021, McLoud, OK:** A public-school special-education teacher was constantly playing religious music in her classroom and discussing God with students. Americans United wrote to the school district, explaining that this behavior was unconstitutional and to ask that the district put a stop to it. We received a response from the district stating that they had spoken with the teacher and that the behavior would not continue.

**AU gets public school to replace pregame prayer with moment of silence -**

**September 2021, Washington, GA:** A public high school routinely had prayer before football games over the loudspeaker. Americans United wrote to the school district to explain that this practice violates the separation of church and state. The school district suspended the practice, and we understand that the school district instituted a moment of silence instead.

**Superintendent will no longer include Bible verses in official communications**

**after Americans United complaint - September 2021, Glen Rose, TX:** A public-school superintendent ended communications to parents and staff with Bible quotes. Americans United wrote to the school district to explain that this practice is unconstitutional. The district's attorneys responded that this was a one-time occurrence and that it would not happen again.

**Public school stops coach from praying with students after AU letter - September**

**2021, Cookeville, TN:** AU received a complaint about a high school football coach praying with players after games. Our letter to the district explained that school staff praying with students is unconstitutional and asked the district to stop the practice. Within days of receiving our letter, the district had stopped the coach from praying with students.

**AU gets religious displays removed from middle-school classroom - September**

**2021, Lubbock, TX:** A middle-school teacher had numerous religious displays in her classroom, including Latin crosses and Bible verses. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the Constitution forbids public-school teachers from displaying religious iconography in their classrooms. The district informed us that the displays have been removed from the classroom.

**Public-school prayer practice ended as a result of AU complaint - June 2021,**

**Holdenville, OK:** A high-school graduation ceremony opened with a prayer. The prayer was delivered by a student and was listed on the graduation program as an invocation. AU

wrote to the school district to explain that the prayer was unconstitutional and asked the district to ensure that future graduation ceremonies do not include prayer. The district responded that there would be restraints on this type of activity in the future. We have not received reports of any further violations.

**AU letter causes Detroit to remove preferential treatment of religion in funding program - April 2021, Detroit, MI:** AU received a complaint about the City of Detroit's participation in the Faith Forward Fund. The Fund was intended to provide money for nonprofits, both religious and nonreligious, that had assisted the City with Covid relief efforts. But various eligibility requirements—as well as the Fund's name—indicated that there was a preference for Fund money going to religious organizations. We wrote to the City and to the private organizers of the Fund to explain that the City could not legally be involved with the Fund if it preferred religious grantees. Our letter asked that the City and its partners ensure that nonreligious groups and religious groups be treated equally with respect to eligibility for Fund money, that this be clearly communicated to grant applicants, and that restrictions be placed on the use of the money to prevent it from being utilized for religious activity. The City of Detroit withdrew its financial contributions to the Fund, and the City and the Fund's private organizers complied with our other requests by making clear that nonreligious groups were equally eligible for Fund grants as religious groups and by prohibiting religious uses of the grant funds.

**Public transportation system removes nativity display after AU letter - March 2021, Jamaica, NY:** Americans United received a complaint that the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) had a practice of allowing the erection of a privately-owned nativity display in one of its stations. Our complainant had contacted LIRR to complain about the display but had been told that they believed the display satisfied the requirements of the law. We wrote to LIRR to explain that they had applied an incorrect legal standard and to describe the proper standard and the range of options that were available to fix the violation. We learned in December 2021 that LIRR did not allow the nativity display again.

**MD VFD replaces prayer with moment of silence after AU letter - March 2021, Annapolis, MD:** This complaint came from a volunteer EMT at a Maryland Volunteer Fire Department. The VFD opened its company meetings—attendance at which is tied to a variety of benefits and requirements within the company—with a prayer from the company Chaplain. The VFD received funding and other kinds of assistance from Anne Arundel County. There is at least one case that holds that Maryland VFDs are governmental actors. On those bases we wrote to the County and to the VFD to ask them to remove the prayer from the meetings. The VFD replaced the prayer with a moment of silence.

**AU letter prompts county sheriff to remove religious message from website - February 2021, Newkirk, OK:** The website of the Kay County Sheriff's Office had three pictures on its front page. One was of the Sheriff, another was of the office staff, and the third was of a barn with the words "Jesus is Lord" painted on it. AU wrote to the Sheriff to explain that displaying a religious message on a governmental website is unconstitutional and to ask that the picture be removed. Soon after our letter was sent, the Sheriff informed us that his legal counsel had advised him to remove the picture. We have confirmed that the picture is no longer on the website.

**School district removes religious displays from classrooms in response to AU complaint - January 2021, Sparta, TN:** AU received information that religious displays were common in the White County Schools. Our letter focused on a particularly egregious example, where a teacher had at least ten overtly proselytizing messages displayed throughout her classroom and door. We wrote to the district to explain that religious displays in public-school classrooms are unconstitutional and to ask that the district (1) remove the specific displays mentioned in the letter, and (2) remove any other similar religious displays throughout the school district. The district responded that it had addressed the displays, and our complainant did not report any further violations.

## 2020

**Tax collector's office stops playing religious music in public areas after AU letter - December 2020, St. Augustine, FL:** We received a complaint that an employee of the St. John's County Tax Collector was playing a Christian music playlist over the loudspeaker at one of the branch offices. The music was audible to employees and customers of the office alike. AU wrote to the Tax Collector to explain that broadcasting religious messages in a governmental office is unconstitutional. We received a response claiming that the Tax Collector's employees did not "pipe music" into their offices, but that regardless the employees would no longer be allowed to play music in the office.

**School district removes proselytizing messages from official website - August 2020, Chester, SC:** We received a complaint regarding the posting of numerous religious messages on a high school's athletics website by the school's Athletic Director and Physical Education teacher. AU wrote to the district to explain that it is unconstitutional for school employees to post religious messages on official websites or in offices where students can see the messages. Our letter also raised concerns about the association of this behavior with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, which is usually organized as a student-run club, in which case it would be unconstitutional for a school employee to engage in religious activities related to the club. We did not receive a formal response from the school, but our complainant informed us that the posts have been removed from the athletics website and has not informed us of any further violations.

**School district apologizes for proselytizing its staff - August 2020, Winslow, AZ:** We were contacted by a large group of teachers and administrators complaining of religious content in a local school district's back-to-school kick-off event for district staff. The district's new Superintendent invited eight local religious leaders (and one other speaker who, by all accounts, still spoke about religion) to proselytize the assembled staff for an hour and a half, quoting the Bible, delivering prayers, telling staff that God would protect them from COVID-19, and asking staff to raise their hands if they believe in God. AU quickly wrote to the school district, demanding an immediate apology and written assurance that nothing like this would happen again. Within 24 hours both the School Board and the Superintendent issued separate apologies and assurances that this would not happen again.

**School employee removes proselytizing message from emails - June 2020, Sanford, FL:** AU was contacted by a parent who had received an email from an employee of the Seminole County Public Schools. The email ended with the following quotation in the signature line: "Believe. When a believing person prays, great things happen. James 5:16." We wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of religious messages in official government communications violates the separation of church and state. The district sent us an official response that explained at great length that it did not think that the employee had done anything wrong, but that she had voluntarily removed the religious message from her email signatures anyway.

**AU gets county health department to stop streaming church services - April 2020, Central City, KY:** The Muhlenburg County Health Department was live-streaming Christian church services on the department's official Facebook page. AU wrote to the

Department to explain that governmental transmission of religious messages violates the separation of church and state. The department did not formally respond or our letter but stopped the live-streaming practice.

**Town removes proselytizing social media video after AU complaint - April 2020, Pecos City, TX:** A town posted a video on its official Facebook page of a Town Councilman explaining that COVID-19 is a message from God and encouraging citizens to return to Christian worship and prayer as a response to the pandemic. AU wrote to the town to explain that posting a proselytizing video on its official social media pages is unconstitutional and asking it to remove the video. The town apologized for the post and complied with AU's request.

## 2019

**School replaces prayer with moment of silence as a result of AU advocacy - December 2019, Murfreesboro, TN:** AU received a complaint about a Thanksgiving activity at an elementary school where a parent taking part in the event delivered a prayer to the assembled staff and students. We wrote to the school district to explain that prayer at public school events is unconstitutional and to ask that it ensure that this did not happen again. The school district responded that it had spoken with the involved parents to instruct them that they could not present prayers at school events, and the district replaced the prayers at the Thanksgiving activity with a moment of silence.

**AU stops coach from praying at school activity - December 2019, Moon Township, PA:** The coach of a public-high-school team delivered a prayer at a team banquet. AU wrote to the school district to explain that it is unconstitutional for prayer by school employees to be included at public-school activities. The superintendent acknowledged that the coach had been in the wrong and assured us that the incident would not be repeated.

**Religious display removed from government building after AU letter - September 2019, Los Angeles, CA:** A senior center operated by a city displayed a print of "The Last Supper" in its dining hall. AU wrote to explain that governmental endorsement of religious messages is unconstitutional. As a result, the print was removed.

**County Sheriff expands addiction-treatment resources after AU letter - September 2019, Rensselaer, IN:** The Jasper County Sheriff's Office's website had a permanent link to a religious addiction-treatment program. AU wrote to the Sheriff to explain that it is unconstitutional for the Sheriff to endorse a religious treatment program or to give special treatment to such a program. In response to our letter, the Sheriff's office replaced the old link with a new one that showed a chart of a variety of addiction treatment options within the county.

**Prayer locker removed from public school after AU advocacy - September 2019, Pikeville, KY:** A public school had created a "prayer locker," where students could place prayer requests for a religious club. There was evidence that this display had been masterminded by teachers in the school. AU wrote to the school district that religious displays such as the prayer locker are unconstitutional and to ask that it be removed.

Although we never received a formal response, media reports showed that the district removed the prayer locker.

**Public school stops Gideons from distributing Bibles after AU complaint - July 2019, Kress, TX:** AU received a complaint that an elementary school had allowed members of the Gideons to come onto school property to distribute Bibles to students during class. We wrote to the district to explain that this was unconstitutional and to ask the district not to permit this conduct to reoccur. The district responded, assuring us that the distribution was against its policies and that it had taken steps to ensure that similar distributions would not happen in the future.

**AU convinces city to remove cross and religious message from Facebook post - June 2019, Wabash, IN:** On Easter, the official Facebook page of the City of Wabash posted an image of a Latin cross and the words “He is risen.” AU wrote to the city to explain that this post violated the separation of church and state and to ask that it be removed. The city agreed and removed the post and all other religious posts.

**City removes Bible verse from holiday message after AU letter - May 2019, Quincy, MA:** A Christmas message on the City of Quincy’s official Facebook page included a Bible verse and religious message. AU wrote to the City to explain that it is unconstitutional for the government to include religious messages in official communications. We asked that the city remove the religious content and refrain from posting similar messages in the future. The city agreed to stop putting Bible verses in city communications.

**AU convinces school district not to continue religious assemblies - May 2019, Ft. Wright, KY:** AU received a complaint about a religious assembly, featuring references to Jesus and the reading of several Bible verses, at a public middle school. Our letter to the district explained that this assembly violated the U.S. Constitution and asked that future assemblies not contain religious content. The district agreed that the assembly was inappropriate and instructed the principal not to hold religious assemblies in the future.

**School district stops practice of including religious messages in events, communications after AU complaint - May 2019, Amite, LA:** A public school district hosted a mandatory staff event featuring religious content, such as speakers quoting the Bible, and the superintendent sent email messages to staff with religious content. AU wrote to the district to explain that both practices are unconstitutional and to ask that they be stopped. The district agreed to stop these practices.

**Prayer invitations and baccalaureate endorsement stopped after AU letter - May 2019, Greencastle, PA:** AU received a complaint about two violations at a public school. The coach of the girls’ soccer team invited students to a private prayer session using her school email account and the team mailing list. The school also advertised and ran a practice for a religious baccalaureate ceremony. Our letter explained that using school resources to invite students to a prayer event and to endorse a religious graduation ceremony are both violations of the separation of church and state. The district responded that it had instructed the coach not to invite students to private prayer sessions and that it would stop supporting the baccalaureate event.

**Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast changed to nonreligious community activity after AU letter - April 2019, Las Vegas, NV:** A school district was sending students to an annual Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast. AU wrote to the district to explain that it is unconstitutional for a school district to send students to a religious activity. In response to AU’s letter, the district worked with the event’s organizer to change the event. It ceased being a prayer breakfast and became a “Mayor’s Community Breakfast,” with the religious elements replaced by events and speakers reflecting on respect, compassion, and community values.

**AU helps to convince university to drop affiliation with religious healthcare provider - April 2019, Oakland, CA:** The University of California was considering expanding an affiliation arrangement with Dignity Health—a religiously affiliated healthcare organization governed by the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services. The affiliation would have forced University doctors and staff to comply with religion-based restrictions when working in Dignity Health facilities and would have endangered University patients’ access to healthcare based on religious dogma. Several organizations had protested this arrangement on a variety of other grounds, but AU saw that separation-of-church-and-state concerns posed by the proposed agreement had not been raised adequately. AU brought our institutional expertise to bear by writing to the University to explain the Establishment Clause concerns raised by the proposed affiliation. Shortly after AU’s letter was sent, the University scuttled the proposed affiliation.

**Professor ends extra credit for attending church after AU complaint - April 2019, Columbus, GA:** A Columbus Technical College professor was offering his students extra credit if they came to his church and listened to a proselytizing sermon. AU wrote to the College to explain that this behavior was unconstitutional at a public college and to ask that the College stop the practice. The College investigated and ended the practice.

**AU gets government to stop displaying nativity scene - April 2019, Coplay, PA:** A Pennsylvania borough displayed a lone nativity scene on government property during the holidays. AU wrote to the borough to explain that a governmental display of religious items without a nonreligious context violates the separation of church and state. The borough responded that it had reviewed the case law and that the nativity scene would no longer be displayed.

**AU gets public school to end loudspeaker prayer at football games - February 2019, Bronson, FL:** AU received a complaint that a public-school football game opened with a prayer and a religious song played over the loudspeaker. We wrote to the school district to explain that school-sponsored prayers and religious messages are unconstitutional and to ask that this conduct be discontinued. The district did not formally respond, but we confirmed through media reports that it stopped the prayer and instituted a moment of silence instead.

**Town stops hosting mayor’s prayer breakfasts in public schools thanks to AU letter - February 2019, New Hope, MN:** A Minnesota town hosted a mayor’s prayer breakfast, often in local schools and incorporating students into the event. AU wrote to the town to explain that government-sponsored religious events are unconstitutional, especially when public-school students are invited to participate in religious activity. We received no



official response, but our complainant informed us that the following year's prayer breakfast was cancelled.

**AU convinces public school to stop endorsing religious events - February 2019, Evans, GA:** AU received a complaint regarding a public school using its official messaging system to encourage attendance at a "See You at the Pole" religious event through phone calls and text messages to parents. We wrote to the district that using school resources to promote a religious event violated the law and to ask the district not to do this in the future. The district responded that it had discussed the matter with the relevant school officials and that such conduct would not occur again.

**District will not hold religious assemblies after AU complaint - February 2019, Montrose, PA:** A public school hosted an assembly featuring a speaker who told students about his Christian faith and urged students to let Jesus into their lives. AU wrote to the school district, explaining that this assembly was a flagrant violation of the rights of students and teachers, and asking the district not to allow such speakers in the future. The district responded that it had been blindsided by the religious content in the assembly and promised that there would be no religious content in future assemblies.

**AU stops government trip to creationist sites - February 2019, Roxboro, NC:** AU received a complaint regarding a Parks and Recreation Department that was planning to take local citizens on a trip to the Ark Encounter and to the Creation Museum, two venues that promote the Biblical doctrine of creationism. We wrote a letter to the department explaining that it would be unconstitutional for the government to conduct an official trip to either attraction. The department informed us that it had canceled the trip.

## 2018

**AU thwarts religious prayer, play - October 2018, Belle Chasse, LA:** An elementary school opened every school assembly and ceremony with prayer. The same school also used a nativity play as its annual holiday play. AU wrote to the school district to explain that both of these practices were flagrant violations of the separation of church and state and asked the school district to put a stop to them. The district agreed and both the prayers and the play were stopped.

**Middle-school graduations no longer held in church after AU letter - October 2018, Lexington, KY:** AU received a complaint about a middle school holding promotion ceremonies (graduations) in a church with religious iconography. We wrote to the school district to explain that this practice is unconstitutional and to ask that the district move the graduation ceremonies to a secular venue. The district responded that it has no future plans to use churches as graduation venues.

**Public school to ensure covering of religious iconography at school activity after AU complaint - October 2018, West Lawn, PA:** AU was contacted by a complainant concerned about a public school's use of an overnight camp operated by a religious group. The camp had visible religious iconography. AU wrote to the school district to explain that exposing students to religious iconography or proselytizing is a violation of the separation of church and state and to urge the school to use a different venue. The school officials wrote

back to emphasize that they were not using any religious materials and did not allow any proselytizing when at the camp. They also agreed to ensure that religious iconography at the camp would be covered when students were present.

**Teacher prayer stopped by AU letter - October 2018, Bakersville, NC:** A public-school teacher was praying with her students before dismissing them for lunch. AU wrote to the school district to explain that this practice violated the Constitution. We did not get an official response, but our complainant has informed us that the teacher switched to a moment of silence after our letter.

**Prayer changed to moment of silence at AU's request - October 2018, Schertz, TX:** A principal at a public high school was leading faculty in prayer at a variety of staff events. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer in such events violate the Constitution. The district agreed to stop the prayers and replace them with a moment of silence.

**Church will no longer be used as graduation venue by public school after AU letter - August 2018, Huntersville, NC:** A charter school was holding graduation ceremonies at a church with visible religious iconography. AU wrote to the school to explain that this violated the separation of church and state and to ask the school to switch to a nonreligious venue. The school never responded, but local news reports show that graduation venue was changed.

**AU stops public schools from including prayer at graduations - August 2018, Kingman, KS:** AU received a complaint that two schools within a school district were inviting pastors to open graduation ceremonies with prayer. Our letter to the school district explained that this practice is unconstitutional. The district agreed to end the practice of including prayer at graduations.

**School district stops football coach from endorsing religion because of AU - August 2018, Murray, KY:** AU received a complaint that a public-school football coach was endorsing religion in a variety of ways, including by hosting team devotionals, hosting team meals at churches, and allowing students to leave practices early solely to attend church and for no other reason. Our letter explained that these practices are unconstitutional and asked the district to discontinue them. The district agreed to fix the violations.

**AU ensures that public school will no longer use social media to promote religious activity - August 2018, Thomson, GA:** A public school used its Facebook page to promote a "prayer walk" held at the school. AU wrote to the district to explain that endorsing this activity violated the law and to ask that the school not do so again. The district agreed that the post was a violation, said that it had been unauthorized, and assured us that it would not happen again.

**Town removes religious ceremony from anniversary festival after AU advocacy - July 2018, Cohasset, MA:** The town of Cohasset was making plans for its 250th Anniversary. The anniversary was slated to include an event called a "Blessing of the Fleet," which involves a religious leader saying a prayer over boats in the town harbor. AU wrote to Cohasset to explain that hosting a religious service during a town festival violates

the separation of church and state. Our original letter received no response, so AU followed up with a public-records request to gather more concrete information about the Town's plans. The records request prompted Cohasset to cancel the Blessing of the Fleet.

**Cross and religious messages removed as a result of AU activism - July 2018, Coupland, TX:** A public school had hung a Latin cross and signs with religious messages in its entrance hallway. AU wrote to the school district to explain that religious displays in a public school violate the Constitution. The district did not respond, but our complainant informs us that the displays have been removed.

**AU stops coach from praying with students - July 2018, Fort Myers, FL:** A public-school football coach was praying with his players. AU sent the school district a letter explaining that this behavior violates the Establishment Clause. The district responded that it had instructed the school's athletic director and coach to comply with the law.

**School district will now use nonreligious venues for events because of AU letter - July 2018, Birmingham, AL:** AU complained to a school district about the practice of hosting school events in churches. Our letter explained that this practice is unconstitutional. The district responded that it had informed district principals that they were to do everything possible to use nonreligious venues, including making better use of the facilities in other district schools.

**Bible verses in public-school murals removed after AU contacts school - April 2018, Colorado Springs, CO:** A public high school commissioned three murals for its walls and the artists of those murals included small references to Bible verses on each of the murals. After receiving a complaint about the references, AU wrote to the school district to explain that the references violated the separation of church and state. The school district brought the artists back and seamlessly removed the references from the murals.

**Coach will no longer pray with students in wake of AU letter - April 2018, Huntingburg, IN:** A high-school football coach regularly participated in student prayer before and after games. The school's athletic director told the media that this was permissible so long as the prayer was student-led. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the athletic director was wrong and that the coach's behavior in fact violated the Constitution. We asked the district to stop the behavior, which it agreed to do.

**Public school ends involvement with religious club at AU's request - April 2018, Decatur, IL:** AU received a complaint about a public school's involvement with an after-school religious club. The school had given the club dedicated space on its website and school personnel were referring students to the club. Our letter explained that the referrals and the endorsement of the program on the website violated the separation of church and state. We therefore asked the school district to end its involvement with the club. The school district complied with our request.

**AU stops government funds paying for creationism classes - April 2018, Haviland, KS:** A local Recreation Board was providing government funds to pay for children to attend after-school creationism classes. AU wrote to the Board to explain that government funds

cannot legally be used to pay for religious instruction, such as classes on creationism. We asked that the Board discontinue the funding, which the Board did.

**Coach will no longer proselytize students after AU intervention - March 2018, Auburn Hills, MI:** AU received a complaint about a public-school basketball coach's regular proselytizing of his students. We wrote to the school district to inform district officials of this behavior and to explain that it violated the separation of church and state. The district investigated, put a stop to the teacher's behavior, and informed us that it would talk about these issues during yearly training meetings for athletic coaches in the district.

**AU letter results in removal of crosses from government office - March 2018, Lockhart, TX:** A county-government office displayed two Latin crosses on a wall. AU wrote to the county to explain that the display of Latin crosses on government property is unconstitutional. The county did not respond, but a local member of AU informed us that the crosses had been removed.

**County website removes Bible verse after AU complains - March 2018, Burgaw, NC:** The website of the county register of deeds included a Bible verse. AU wrote to the county about the display and asked that it be removed. The county never formally responded, but the verse has been removed from the website.

**No more loudspeaker prayer at football games after AU letter - March 2018, Elmore City, OK:** AU received a complaint that a school employee was reading prayers over the loudspeaker at the start of high-school football games. We wrote to the school district to explain that the recitation of prayers at public-school events violated the separation of church and state. The district agreed to stop the practice.

**Public school will stop endorsing release-time program at AU's urging - March 2018, Prattsburgh, NY:** A public-school official sent a letter to parents to endorse a release-time class and encourage participation in the class. AU wrote to the district to explain the law surrounding release-time classes and to inform the district that while the classes are legal, governmental endorsement of them is not. The district agreed and said that it would modify its materials in the future to remove any suggestion of endorsement of the program.

**VA Medical Center removes Bible from display at AU's urging - February 2018, Decatur, GA:** A Veterans Affairs Medical Center had a "Missing Man table" in its cafeteria that included a Bible in the display. AU wrote to the Medical Center to explain that religious displays are unconstitutional and to ask that the Bible be removed. After several follow-up contacts, the Medical Center responded that it had removed the Bible from the Missing Man table.

**County removes religious material from office after AU complaint - February 2018, Chattanooga, TN:** A government tag-and-title office was displaying religious materials at its counter. AU wrote to the county to explain the law and ask that the religious materials be removed. The county responded that the materials were unauthorized and had been removed.

## 2017

### **Coach will no longer pray with team after AU letter - December 2017,**

**Bloomington, IN:** AU received a complaint about a high-school football coach who had his team take a knee and pray before each game and practice. We wrote to the district to explain that it is unconstitutional for a public-school employee to pray with students or to require students to pray. The district informed us that the coach would no longer be leading the team in prayer.

### **Proselytizing substitute teacher disciplined after AU complains of behavior -**

**December 2017, Chesnee, SC:** A substitute teacher at a public school openly proselytized students and encouraged them to visit his website to learn more about Jesus. AU wrote to the district to protest this flagrant violation of the separation of church and state. The district responded that it had addressed this issue with the substitute and that it would not happen again.

### **Nativity scene will no longer be placed on government property after AU complaint - December 2017, Emmaus, PA:**

The Emmaus Public Library was displaying a nativity scene on library property. AU wrote to the borough to explain that the display of a nativity scene on government property violates the Establishment Clause unless it is subsumed in a broader secular display. The borough's attorneys responded, stating disagreement about the law but nonetheless agreeing to remove the nativity scene.

### **Thanks to AU, state park no longer puts Bibles in cabins - December 2017,**

**Lebanon, TN:** A state park had placed Bibles in government-run lodging on park grounds. AU wrote to park officials to explain that the government may not place Bibles in park cabins. We did not receive a response, but our complainant visited the park again and confirmed that the Bibles have been removed.

### **School district instructs principal to stop endorsing religious activities after AU complaint - December 2017, Madisonville, TX:**

AU received a complaint about a high-school principal who made a Facebook post endorsing a religious after-school activity and stating that the school was actively participating in the event. We wrote to the district to explain that school endorsement of and participation in religious events is unconstitutional. The district superintendent told us that he had spoken to the principal and that this kind of thing would not happen in the future.

### **AU complaint prompts removal of cross from public park - December 2017, Hill**

**City, MN:** A display of a soldier kneeling before a cross was erected in a city-owned park. AU wrote to the city that displays of crosses on government property violate the Constitution and to ask that the cross be removed. The city complied and removed the cross.

### **Police department removes religious posts from Facebook page after AU letter -**

**December 2017, Darlington, SC:** AU received a complaint about a police department that was regularly posting religious content on its official Facebook page. We wrote to the department to explain that posting religious imagery on an official government webpage violates the Constitution. The department removed the images.

**AU stops football coach's practice of praying with students - October 2017, Covina, CA:** A high-school football coach was leading his students in prayer. AU wrote to the district to explain that this behavior is unconstitutional and to ask that it be stopped. The district spoke with the coaching staff and told us that the staff had stopped the practice.

**Prayer at mandatory assemblies will cease after AU complaint - October 2017, Oakhurst, CA:** AU received a complaint regarding a mandatory assembly commemorating September 11, held at a public school. A minister was invited to the assembly and led the crowd in prayer. We wrote to the district that prayer at school events violates the Establishment Clause. The district investigated and said that it would take steps to ensure that there was no prayer at future school events.

**AU letter ensures that public school will not use church for archery events - August 2017, Williamstown, KY:** A public school's archery team held practices at a local church. AU wrote to the school to explain that using the church for these practices was unconstitutional. The district responded that the school had no plans to return to the church in the future, and that administrators would discuss with the coach the legal concerns raised by the use of the church.

**Religious message removed from university website after AU complaint - August 2017, Chapel Hill, NC:** A professor at a public university had posted a religious message on his school website. AU wrote to the university to explain that the display of religious messages on a government website is unconstitutional. The university contacted us to say that it was investigating the matter, and shortly thereafter our complainant informed us that the message had been removed.

**School district moves meeting from church to secular venue in response to AU letter - August 2017, Twentynine Palms, CA:** A school district planned to hold a mandatory staff meeting in a chapel. AU wrote to the district to explain that forcing staff to go to a church was a constitutional violation. The school district moved the meeting to a local high school.

**AU letter prompts school district to issue guidance to staff after religious content at assembly - August 2017, Falls Church, VA:** AU received a complaint that a public-school staff member read aloud a Bible verse at an end-of-year assembly attended by students and other staff. We wrote to the district to explain that prayers at school events are unconstitutional and to ask that this not occur again. The district agreed that the content was inappropriate and provided guidance to ensure that it will not happen again.

**Prayer at public-school graduation stopped after AU letter - August 2017, Lumberton, NC:** A public school opened its graduation ceremonies with a prayer delivered by a student. The prayer was listed in the graduation program as an "invocation." AU wrote to the school district to explain that this was unconstitutional and to ask that the prayer practice be discontinued. The school district agreed to revise its policies to prevent prayer at future graduations.

**Thanks to AU, school calendar no longer instructs students to “Go to church” - July 2017, Darien, GA:** AU received a complaint that the calendar for a public-school football team had every Sunday labeled “Go to church.” We wrote to the school district to explain that this was unconstitutional and to ask that the message be removed. The school district did not formally respond but removed the message.

**City Commissioner stops proselytizing constituents after AU letter - June 2017, Deltona, FL:** A city commissioner was using his comment period during meetings to read passages from the Bible aloud to the audience. AU wrote to the commission to explain that it is unconstitutional for government officials to use their position to proselytize. The only official response we received was from the commissioner, who vowed to continue. Our complainant informs us, however, that the commission has since stopped this practice.

**Public school ensures that teacher will no longer proselytize students after AU exposes behavior - June 2017, Huntington, IN:** In a promotional video for his church, a public-school teacher told a lengthy story in which he boasted of proselytizing several of his classes. AU wrote to the school district to explain the law and to ask that the district ensure that this teacher no longer engages in proselytizing. The district agreed to ensure that this will not happen again.

**Religious iconography removed from Memorial Day sign at AU’s urging - May 2017, Alhambra, CA:** The city of Alhambra created a sign to promote its Memorial Day ceremony that featured a silhouette of a soldier kneeling in front of a Latin cross. AU wrote to the city to explain that the display of the cross violated the Establishment Clause. The City agreed to rework the sign to remove the religious iconography.

**AU letter stops principal from opening mandatory staff meetings with prayer - May 2017, Nashville, TN:** An elementary-school principal was opening mandatory staff meetings with prayer. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at school events violates the separation of church and state. The district agreed to put a stop to the prayers.

**Public library removes religious message on premises after AU letter - April 2017, Bradenton, FL:** AU learned that a public library had a café located on the premises and that the café routinely posted religious messages and Bible verses. We wrote to the library to explain that displaying religious messages on government property violates the Constitution. The library removed the displays.

**Public school will no longer distribute and collect permission slips for Good News Club thanks to AU - April 2017, Mt. Vernon, IN:** A public school was distributing permission slips for the Good News Club and instructing parents to return the slips to the school secretary. AU wrote to the school district to explain that while allowing the GNC to use school facilities on an equal basis with other community groups is constitutional, involving the school in the operation of the club by collecting permission slips is not. The school district agreed to end the practice of distributing and collecting permission slips for the GNC.

**Chief of Police agrees to stop including religious references in official communications after AU letter - April 2017, Indianapolis, IN:** AU received a

complaint regarding an email message sent by a chief of police that included a reference to scriptures. Our letter explained that it violates the constitution for a government official to present religious messages in official communications. The chief replied that he understood and would not include religious references in future communications.

**No more religious music in class after AU writes to school district - March 2017, Ashland, TX:** A public-school teacher regularly played religious music in his class while students were working and made religious comments and statements in class. AU wrote to the school district to explain that these actions were unconstitutional. The school district put a stop to the practices.

**AU convinces city to end sponsorship of religious concert - March 2017, Round Rock, TX:** The city of Round Rock was sponsoring an annual holiday concert that was held in a Christian church and featured religious music and religious commentary by the orchestra director. AU wrote to the city to explain that sponsorship of a religious event is unconstitutional and to ask that the city end its sponsorship of the event. The city responded and agreed to end its sponsorship of the concert.

**AU stops loudspeaker prayers at public-school sporting event - February 2017, Pulaski, TN:** AU learned that a public school opened its basketball games with a prayer delivered over the loudspeaker. We wrote to the district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at public-school activities violates the Constitution. The district agreed to end the practice.

**Religious statement removed from public-school handout at AU's urging - February 2017, Valley Springs, AR:** A public-school track-and-field handout emphasized that students on the team were representing "yourself, your family, your teammates, your coach, your school, and your God." AU wrote to the school district to explain that the reference to students representing God violated the Constitution, and to ask that the reference be removed. The school district agreed to remove the religious statement.

**AU letter convinces city to secularize its Christmas-tree-lighting ceremony - January 2017, Smith's Station, GA:** An annual Christmas-tree-lighting ceremony was opened with prayer and featured a choir performing religious holiday songs. AU wrote to the city to explain the law and to ask that the religious elements of the ceremony be removed. The city agreed to end the prayer practice and to ensure that future ceremonies would feature predominantly secular music.

**School removes religious display after AU letter - January 2017, Ossining, NY:** A public school had a plaque with a religious message hung in the hallway. AU wrote to the school district to explain that this plaque was unconstitutional, and the district removed the plaque.

**Kindergarten teacher no longer prays with students thanks to AU - January 2017, New Matamoras, OH:** AU received a complaint about a kindergarten teacher who prayed daily with her students. We wrote to the school district, and officials there agreed to end the practice immediately.



**AU letter ends teacher's practice of discussing religious content in class and praying with students - January 2017, Sumter, SC:** A public-school teacher regularly included religious content in her class and led her students in prayer. AU wrote to the school district to complain, and the district immediately put a stop to the behavior.

## 2016

**School district stops assigning book featuring Jesus, after caution from AU - December 2016, Orange, CA:** AU received a report that a public school was having students read the book "Coaltown Jesus," which tells a story about Jesus appearing to a teenager who has suffered a personal tragedy. Our letter warned the school district that the book, while not explicitly proselytizing, could be seen as endorsing Christianity and encouraging students to turn to Jesus to help with personal problems. In addition, we explained, the book's irreverent portrayal of Jesus might offend devout Christian students. The district agreed to stop using the book.

**After AU complaint, public school ends plan to take students to Easter Mass - November 2016, Groton, MA:** AU learned that a high-school choir planned to perform during an Easter Mass at an Italian church during a trip to Europe. We wrote to the district to explain that it is unconstitutional for a public school to take students to a church service. The school did not go through with the performance at the Mass.

**AU letter convinces school district to end graduation prayers - November 2016, Simpson, LA:** A high school opened its graduation ceremony with prayers from students and invited clergy. AU wrote to the district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at public-school graduation ceremonies is unconstitutional. The district held a seminar for staff to go over the relevant law and ended the prayer practice.

**Gideons no longer allowed to distribute Bibles on school property after AU complaint - November 2016, North Augusta, SC:** An elementary school allowed Gideons to come onto school property and distribute Bibles to students. AU wrote to the school district to explain that allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles to students on school property is unconstitutional. The district agreed that the Gideons would no longer be allowed to distribute religious material on school grounds.

**AU letter prompts school to remove Bible verses posted in gym - November 2016, Huntsville, TN:** Two Bible verses were posted in a public-school gymnasium. AU wrote to the school district to explain that religious displays in a public school violate the separation of church and state. The district removed the displays.

**School district agrees to remove excessive religious content from choir program after AU complaint - October 2016, Conway, SC:** AU received a complaint about a public-school choir program that featured mandatory concerts that were almost exclusively made up of religious songs and in which students were required to wear shirts with a Bible passage, Psalms 23:3, on them. We wrote to the school district to explain that these concerts violated the separation of church and state. The district agreed to police its programs more closely and to provide training for staff in church-state separation.

**Public-school football games will have moment of silence instead of prayer after AU letter - October 2016, Chester, SC:** A public school opened its football games with a prayer delivered by invited clergy. AU wrote to the school district to explain that this is unconstitutional and to ask that it end the practice. The district agreed to replace the prayer with a moment of silence.

**AU letter prompts public school to stop collecting permission slips for Good News Club and add disclaimers to fliers - October 2016, Wichita, KS:** AU received a complaint regarding an elementary school's practice of distributing Good News Club fliers to students and then having students return permission slips attached to the fliers. We wrote to the school district to explain that school involvement in collecting permission slips for a religious club was unconstitutional and that the design of the fliers themselves was constitutionally suspect. The district investigated, ended the practice of teachers collecting permission slips, and required the religious club to add a disclaimer to the flier clarifying that the district did not endorse the club.

**AU letter ends prayer at school staff meetings - September 2016, Lafayette, LA:** Administrators at a public-school district were leading teachers and staff in a recitation of the Lord's Prayer at mandatory staff meetings. AU wrote to the district to explain that imposing prayer on staff at mandatory meetings is unconstitutional and asked it to end the practice. The district replied that it has addressed the practice, and our complainant confirmed that the prayers have ceased.

**Religious displays removed from public-school classrooms at AU's urging - September 2016, McDonough, GA:** Several teachers in a public school erected religious displays in their classrooms. AU wrote to the school district to explain that religious displays in public-school classrooms violate the separation of church and state. The district instructed staff to remove all religious displays from their classrooms.

**School district will no longer hold back-to-school meetings in church after AU request - September 2016, Tustin, CA:** A school district held its back-to-school staff meetings in a church with prominent religious iconography. AU wrote to the district to explain that hosting a school event in that environment was unconstitutional. The district agreed to refrain from hosting future school events in churches.

**Teachers will no longer communicate religious messages to students or pray with them after AU complaint - September 2016, St. Matthews, SC:** Several public-school teachers were praying with students and communicating religious messages to students, both verbally and through religious displays on the walls. AU complained about this conduct to the school district, which immediately took action to stop it.

**City replaces cross with tombstone at veterans park after AU letter - September 2016, Randall, MN:** AU received a complaint regarding a display at a city-owned veterans park that depicted a soldier kneeling in front of a Latin cross. We wrote to the city to explain that the display by a governmental body of a cross violates the separation of church and state. The city sent no formal response but replaced the cross with a plain tombstone.

**AU letter prompts school district to remove religious content from anti-drunk-driving assembly - September 2016, Waco, TX:** A high school conducted a mandatory

anti-drunk-driving assembly that included a faux funeral, complete with prayer and readings from the Bible. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer and religious content in a public-school activity is unconstitutional. The district agreed to ensure that future school events do not include religious content.

**School removes church advertisements from ID cards after AU letter - September 2016, Siloam Springs, AR:** The ID cards for a public high school had advertisements printed on the back for a local church. AU wrote to the school district to explain that having a permanent advertisement for a church printed on student IDs communicated impermissible school endorsement of the church. The district contacted us to say that they were replacing the cards and that they had spoken with their printing company to ensure that this does not happen again.

**AU convinces City of Houston to stop Councilperson from sending proselytizing Easter messages to constituents - September 2016, Houston, TX:** A Councilperson for the City of Houston was sending Easter messages—complete with proselytizing language and religious iconography—to constituents under the seal of the City of Houston. AU advised the City that the promulgation of proselytizing messages using the Councilperson’s official email and under the City’s seal violated the separation of church and state. The City’s attorneys agreed and have assured us that they have spoken with the Councilperson to ensure that this will not happen again.

**Texas school stops singing prayers at school activities, thanks to AU - September 2016, Canutillo, TX:** AU received a complaint regarding a public elementary school teaching students to sing “Child’s Prayer,” a musical adaptation of a traditional Christian prayer. We wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of a prayer set to song in a public-school event is unconstitutional and to ask that the district remove the song from the program. The district agreed and assured us that there would not be religious music in future school events.

**Court program to ensure no religious content after AU letter - August 2016, Louisville, KY:** A court program that requires counseling for divorcing couples with children held all program activities in churches. At least one class had included overt proselytizing. AU wrote to the court to inform it of the proselytizing and of the constitutional problems with hosting a court program in churches. The court responded that the program was not supposed to include any proselytizing and that it would take steps to ensure that none occurred in the future. The court also informed us that it was working to expand the sites hosting the program to include nonreligious locations.

**School district removes prayer from future events after AU complaint - August 2016, Port Aransas, TX:** AU received a complaint regarding the inclusion of prayer at a public-school Veterans Day ceremony. We wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at a public-school event is unconstitutional. The district responded that prayer would no longer be included at future events.

**Despite fierce public opposition, AU convinces Board of Education to replace prayer with moment of silence - June 2016, Monck’s Corner, SC:** A local board of education opened its meetings with a recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. AU wrote to the board to explain that the inclusion of prayer at school-board meetings violates the separation of

church and state. The board ended the prayer practice, replacing it with a moment of silence. Despite tremendous push-back at both the local and state levels, the board has maintained the moment of silence at AU's urging.

**Public school ends prayer practice after AU letter - May 2016, Jamestown, TN:** AU received a complaint that a public-school teacher delivered a prayer over the loudspeaker before a school football game. We wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at school sporting events is unconstitutional. The school's attorney responded to assure us that the school has now been directed to follow the law and that it would be holding training to ensure compliance.

**AU gets religious signs removed from public-school classroom - May 2016, Avondale, AZ:** A public-school teacher had multiple signs posted in her classroom with Bible quotations. AU wrote to the school district to explain that religious displays in public-school classrooms violate the separation of church and state and to ask that they be removed. The school district complied and removed the displays.

**Public school ends support for baccalaureate ceremony at AU's insistence - May 2016, Liberty Township, OH:** A public high school organized and sponsored a religious baccalaureate graduation ceremony. AU wrote to the school district to explain that school-sponsored religious ceremonies violate the separation of church and state. The District issued disclaimers for the 2016 service and agreed to fully disassociate itself from any similar service in the future.

**No more religious displays in government office after AU complaint - May 2016, Nashville, TN:** The Obion County Department of Human Services offices had a religious display in the common area open to the public. AU wrote to the Department to explain the law and ask that the display be removed. The Department agreed and removed the display.

**AU convinces Sheriff's Office to remove religious content from publication - May 2016, New City, NY:** AU received a complaint that the Rockland County Sheriff's Office had a religious quotation in a publication on their website. We wrote to the Sheriff's Office to point this out and explain that a religious quotation in a government publication violates the separation of church and state. The Sheriff's Office removed the religious material.

**Highway patrol removes religious display from office at AU's urging - May 2016, Carson City, NV:** The Nevada Highway Patrol office in Las Vegas had a religious display posted in public view. AU wrote to the Patrol to explain that religious displays on public property violate the Establishment Clause. The Patrol responded by removing the display.

**AU ensures that public school will no longer hold fundraisers for religious group - May 2016, Manhattan, KS:** AU received a complaint that a public elementary school had held a toy-drive and fundraiser on behalf of the Salvation Army. We wrote to the school district to explain that providing financial support to a religious organization violates the separation of church and state. The district agreed that the fundraiser would not be repeated.

**Teacher’s daily before-meal prayers with students stopped by AU - May 2016, Burkburnett, TX:** A public-school pre-K teacher led her students in daily prayer before meals. AU complained to the school district and the superintendent stopped the prayer practice.

**County will no longer use religious venue as polling place thanks to AU’s letter - May 2016, Frankfurt, KY:** Shelby County used a religious treatment facility as a polling place. The facility had religious imagery on display in the areas used by voters. AU wrote a letter to the County and to the Kentucky Board of Elections asking them to move the polling place to a secular location because the use of a religious venue with prominent iconography violated the Establishment Clause. The County removed the iconography from the polling place for a primary election and agreed to move the polling place to a dedicated secular location for future elections.

**City Council ends invocations at AU’s urging - April 2016, Thornton, CO:** AU received a complaint that a city council had opened all its meetings for the past year with prayer, and that the council had invited only Christian prayergivers — never those of other faiths. AU wrote to the council to explain that legislative-prayer practices must not show favoritism for a particular faith, and urged the council to do away with the prayer entirely. The council took AU’s advice and eliminated the invocation.

**Public school alters plans to take students to religious camp at AU’s insistence - April 2016, Splendora, TX:** A public school planned to take students on a field trip to an evangelical Christian camp. AU wrote to the school district to explain that taking students to a camp with prominent religious imagery where they might be proselytized would violate the separation of church and state. The district moved the trip to a secular location.

**AU stops public school from teaching creationism - April 2016, Rome, GA:** AU received a complaint that a student-teacher at a public high school was teaching creationism and badmouthing evolution to her students. We explained to the school district that teaching creationism violates the separation of church and state. The district agreed and instructed the student-teacher and other teachers about the constitutional restrictions against religious content in the classroom.

**Public-school football coach will no longer take team to church due to AU complaint - March 2016, Brunswick, GA:** A public-school football coach took his team to church and posted on the team Facebook page that the team “acknowledge[s] God first in everything they do.” AU wrote to the school district to object to a school official taking students to church and posting religious messages on the school Facebook page. The district removed the Facebook message and talked with the coach to ensure that this would not happen again.

**Fire station will no longer display religious messages on sign at AU’s prompting - March 2016, Oakville, WA:** During the holiday season a fire station put a religious message—“Unto Us a Savior is Born Merry Christmas”—on the sign in front of the station. AU wrote to the department to explain that the display of religious messages on government buildings is unconstitutional. The department responded and informed us that there would not be any further religious messages displayed on the sign.

**Tax office removes cross display at urging of AU - March 2016, Conroe, TX:** A county tax office was displaying a Latin cross within view of the public. AU wrote to the county to explain that the display of a cross in a government office is unconstitutional and to ask that the cross be removed. The county's attorney responded that they disagreed with our characterization of the law, but that the cross had been removed anyway.

**Town Council replaces prayer with moment of silence after AU letter - March 2016, Chino Valley, AZ:** The Chino Valley Town Council opened its meetings with a Christian prayer delivered by a member of the Council. Local community members, including a Rabbi, complained to the Council and to AU. AU wrote to the Council to explain that legislator-delivered prayers exclusively reflecting one religion are unconstitutional and we asked that the Council either discontinue the prayer or bring it into line with the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court. The Council responded by removing the prayer and replacing it with a moment of silence.

**AU convinces public school to end band prayer activities - March 2016, Burgaw, NC:** A public school was sponsoring and promoting prayers at band activities. AU wrote to the school to explain that prayer at public-school activities violates the separation of church and state. The school district agreed, taking various steps to educate the school officials involved about their constitutional responsibilities and assuring us that the problem had been addressed.

**Muslim prisoner allowed to participate in Ramadan meals thanks to AU - March 2016, Albany, NY:** AU was contacted by a Muslim prisoner who is an insulin-dependent diabetic and needs to eat regular meals along with his insulin shots. During the month of Ramadan, the prison would not allow him to eat normal meals and also eat the fast-breaking sundown Ramadan meal with his fellow Muslim inmates—he was told that he would either have to eat normal meals and not participate in the Ramadan meal (which would violate his faith), or fast during the day and be allowed to eat the Ramadan meal (which he could not safely do because of his diabetes). We wrote to the Department of Corrections and the prison to explain that the government could not force the inmate to choose between safeguarding his health and exercising his religion, and that there was no compelling reason to restrict him from the Ramadan meal. The Department responded by allowing the inmate to eat his normal meals and to participate in the Ramadan meal.

## 2015

**AU convinces County to remove sign opposing marriage of same-sex couples on religious grounds from County Clerk's office - December 2015, Kiowa, CO:** Elbert County Clerk Dallas Schroeder put up a poster in the Clerk's office with a Biblical quotation to convey opposition to same-sex marriage. AU wrote to the county to explain that government display of such a poster violates not only the separation of church and state, but also the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. We asked the County to remove the sign. The County did not send us an official response, but the sign has since been removed.

**School district no longer opens event with prayer - October 2015, Lufkin, TX:** A public high school hosted an event called Honor America Night as a band fundraiser. The

event opened with a prayer delivered by an invited clergyperson. AU wrote to the school district to explain that school events may not feature prayers. The district agreed to remove the prayer from future Honor America Night events.

**Public school reduces number of religious holiday songs and provides students chance to opt out if they have religious objections - October 2015, Wilton, CT:** AU received a complaint regarding a public high school's holiday concert, which featured an overwhelming amount of religious music and did not allow students to opt out of singing the religious songs. Our letter explained that school-choir performances must be predominantly secular and students must be provided with an opportunity to opt out of singing religious songs without penalty to their grade. The school agreed to reduce the amount of religious music in future performances and to provide an opt-out.

**AU secures assurances that religious displays will not be returned to public park - October 2015, Shelbyville, KY:** A complainant contacted AU to raise concerns about a display in a public park featuring a soldier kneeling in front of a Latin cross. AU investigated and determined that the display had been present for a time, but had since been taken down. AU was concerned that the display would be put back up, and so wrote to the Parks & Recreation Department to explain the law and ask the Department to ensure that the display would not be returned to the park. The Department agreed and assured us that the display would not come back.

**Board of Education changes prayer to moment of silence after AU letter - October 2015, Lenoir, NC:** A public-school Board of Education was opening its meetings with prayer. AU wrote to the Board to explain that official prayers at Board of Education meetings violate the separation of church and state. The Board's attorney called and said that the Board would be adopting a moment of silence moving forward.

**Public school removes Ten Commandments display and stops Gideon Bible distribution at AU's urging - October 2015, Valley Springs, AR:** AU received a complaint regarding a public school that was allowing Gideons to distribute Bibles on school grounds, and that had a Ten Commandments display hanging in its administrative offices. We wrote to the district to explain that both of these practices were unconstitutional, and the district agreed to remove the Commandments display and to stop allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles on campus.

**AU stops graduation prayer - September 2015, White Hall, AR:** A high school was opening its graduation ceremonies with prayer. The prayer was formally listed in the graduation program and the prayergiver was formally introduced by a member of the school administration. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at public-school graduations is unconstitutional. The district responded and agreed to stop the practice.

**Public school stops using church for school plays - September 2015, Little Rock, AR:** In 2012, AU had written to a school district to protest the use of a church as a venue for elementary-school plays. The school district had agreed to stop this practice, and upheld that promise until April 2015, when it again used the church as a venue for the school play. AU wrote to district officials to make them aware that this had happened and to ask them once again not to use the church as a venue. The district said that the use of

the church arose from a scheduling difficulty with a secular venue and assured us that it would not happen again.

**AU successfully opposed unconstitutional prayer policy - September 2015, Coolidge, AZ:** The Coolidge City Council instituted a prayer to open its meetings and voted to require that all prayergivers deliver Christian prayers. AU wrote to the Council to explain that this policy unconstitutionally favored Christianity and discriminated against other religions and the nonreligious. The Council quickly backtracked and dropped the requirement.

**City ends sponsorship of papal-mass broadcast after AU complaint - September 2015, Cape May, NJ:** The City of Cape May planned to sponsor a broadcast at its convention center of the papal-mass in Philadelphia. AU wrote to the City to explain that its sponsorship of a religious event was unconstitutional. The City agreed and withdrew its sponsorship of the event.

**AU negotiates removal of religious image from city website - September 2015, New York, NY:** The City of New York had placed a religious image on a webpage related to the Pope's visit to the city. Lawyers from AU contacted the City's law office and got the image removed from the site.

**School district ends prayer at band banquet - August 2015, Westlake, OH:** A public school's annual marching-band honors dinner opened with a prayer introduced by the band director and delivered by a student. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at public-school events violates the Constitution. Though the district did not provide a formal response, our complainant went to the first dinner following our letter and reported that there was no prayer.

**Fireman's Prayer removed from government website - August 2015, San Antonio, TX:** The San Antonio Fire Department's web page displayed a religious "Fireman's Prayer." AU wrote to the Department to explain that it is unconstitutional for a government agency to post a prayer on its website. The Department removed the prayer.

**Display of soldier kneeling before cross moved from public to private property - August 2015, Knoxville, IA:** AU received a complaint regarding a display on government property that featured a soldier kneeling in front of a Latin cross. We wrote to the city to explain that this display was unconstitutional, and the city decided to move the display to private property.

**Sheriff removes religious decals from patrol cars after AU complaint - August 2015, Dothan, AL:** An Alabama sheriff had placed decals on patrol cars that featured a verse from the Bible. AU wrote to his county to explain that this was unconstitutional. The sheriff removed the decals.

**AU inquiry results in removal of religious iconography from war memorial - August 2015, Boone County, MO:** Following an inquiry from AU, Boone County decided to remove a monument honoring Gulf War veterans from public property because the



monument contained religious iconography. The County plans to replace the monument with a more inclusive, secular memorial.

**Christian flag removed from government property thanks to AU - August 2015, Cochran, GA:** The Bleckley County Sheriff's Department was flying a Christian flag above its office. AU wrote to the County to explain that it is unconstitutional for the government to fly a Christian flag. The County promptly removed the flag.

**VA Clinic removes religious statue at AU's request - August 2015, Fresno, CA:** A Veterans Administration clinic was displaying a religious statue in its public area. AU wrote to the VA to explain that the display of religious iconography on government property is unconstitutional. The VA removed the display.

**Noah's Ark playground equipment removed - August 2015, Columbia, MO:** A government-owned playground had equipment that told the story of Noah's Ark in pictures and words. AU wrote to the Parks and Recreation Department to explain that the display violated the separation of church and state. The Department agreed to remove the display.

**City sponsorship of Catholic Mass ended after AU complaint - August 2015, St. Augustine, FL:** AU received a complaint that the City of St. Augustine, as part of its 450th anniversary celebration, was listed as sponsoring a religious procession and Catholic Mass. We wrote to the City to explain that such sponsorship was unconstitutional. The City agreed and assured us that listing the City as a sponsor of those events was a mistake and that the events were wholly private and received no government support.

**City no longer sponsoring trip to religious play - August 2015, Washington Township, NJ:** City officials were sponsoring a trip by the government-run senior center to see a religious holiday play. AU wrote to the city to explain that the city's sponsorship of this trip violated the separation of church and state. The city agreed and has ended its sponsorship of the trip.

**City removes nativity display from public park - July 2015, Wadena, MN:** The City of Wadena was displaying a nativity scene in a public park during the holiday season. AU wrote to the City to explain that governmental display of a solo nativity scene is unconstitutional and to ask that the display be removed. The City complied.

**AU's complaint results in gospel concert forgoing government funds - June 2015, Pensacola, FL:** Escambia County had approved forty thousand dollars in public funds for a gospel concert. AU wrote to explain that the provision of governmental aid to a religious event violates the separation of church and state. In light of the controversy, the concert's promoters decided not to take the government's money and to rely instead on private funding.

**Public school stops creationism museum field trips - June 2015, Glendive, MT:** AU received a complaint that an elementary school was taking students on field trips to a creationist museum. We wrote to explain that it is unconstitutional for a public school to teach or endorse creationism or other religious doctrines. The school canceled the field trips.

**County Commission Adopts Nondiscriminatory Prayer Policy on AU's Recommendation - May 2015, Lincoln, NC:** A County Commissioner informed the press that he would not allow a non-Christian to deliver the invocation at County Commission meetings. AU wrote to the Commission to explain that discrimination in prayergiver selection is unconstitutional and to ask the Commission to refrain from such discrimination. The Commission agreed and formally adopted a non-discriminatory policy for prayergiver selection, and thereafter scheduled a Humanist to give an invocation.

**City Takes Down Christian Flag Flying Over City Hall at AU's Insistence - May 2015, Cochran, GA:** The City of Cochran began flying the Christian flag at City Hall as an advertisement for a Bible reading event. After receiving numerous complaints, AU wrote to the City to explain that flying the Christian flag above a government building and endorsing a religious event were violations of the separation of church and state. The City removed the flag.

**Basketball Coach Can No Longer Pray With Students, Thanks to AU - April 2015, Wichita, KS:** AU received a complaint that a public-school basketball coach was praying with his players before games. We wrote to the school district, prompting an investigation. The district confirmed the behavior and assured us that it would not continue.

**AU Stops Public School from Assigning Religious Opera - April 2015, Willoughby, OH:** The choir director of an Ohio public school wrote an opera that he intended to be performed by his class. The opera contained numerous religious references and themes. AU wrote to the school district to explain that it is unconstitutional for a government employee to use a religious opera as a classroom assignment. The school agreed and cancelled the performance. A private group stepped up and directed the opera on private property and during non-school hours.

**School District Stops Promoting Religious Events by Email after AU Letter - April 2015, Milford, OH:** The superintendent of a public school district sent an official email to all district staff, students, and community members inviting them to a prayer event. AU wrote to the district to explain that public-school officials may not use their positions to endorse a religious event or to encourage attendance at a religious event. The district responded, assuring us that it would not promote such religious events in the future.

**AU Stops Public School Loudspeaker Prayer - March 2015, Salversville, KY:** A public school was transmitting prayers over its loudspeaker at sporting events. AU complained, explaining that school-sponsored prayer at sporting events is unconstitutional. The school district agreed and stopped the practice.

**No More Prayers on School Trip, Thanks to AU - March 2015, Edinboro, PA:** AU received a complaint regarding a public school's annual trip to a camp where counselors led attending students in prayer at mealtime. Our letter to the school district explained that it is unconstitutional for the school to allow outsiders to pray with or proselytize students at a school event. The school district agreed and spoke with the camp administration, which agreed to stop the prayers.

**AU Letter Gets City Council to End Practice of Asking Audience to Stand for Prayer - February 2015, Orlando, FL:** The Orlando City Council asked visitors to stand for the prayer used to open its meetings. AU wrote to the Council to explain that the law prohibits government bodies from asking citizens to take part in legislative prayer. The Council agreed to make it clear that the audience was not required to stand or otherwise participate in the prayer.

**School Discontinues “Class Bible Verse” and Prayer after AU Complaint - February 2015, Jasper, AR:** AU received a complaint regarding an Arkansas school district that included prayer in its graduation ceremonies and assigned a “class Bible verse” to its graduating classes. Our letter explained that these practices are flagrantly unconstitutional and asked that they be stopped. The school district agreed to end the practices.

## 2014

**Fire Department Removes “Happy Birthday Jesus” Banner From Truck after AU Complaint - December 2014, Whitesboro, NY:** A city fire department painted “Happy Birthday Jesus We Love You” on the side of one of its fire trucks during the holiday season. AU wrote to the city to explain that governmental promotion of Christianity is unconstitutional and to ask that the message be removed. The mayor agreed, removed the display, and assured us that there would be no more such displays in the future.

**University Stops Using Church as Graduation Site - December 2014, Tok, AK:** The University of Alaska Fairbanks’ Tok Center held its commencement ceremonies at a local church. The room used for the ceremony featured a large cross and a picture of Jesus. AU wrote to the University to explain that holding a graduation ceremony in a house of worship with religious iconography was unconstitutional. The University agreed to hold future graduations at secular venues.

**Ohio Drops Discriminatory Requirement from Grant Program after AU Letter - December 2014, Columbus, OH:** The State of Ohio recently passed a program that will provide grants for mentoring programs to partnerships comprised of schools, local businesses, and local non-profits. When the Ohio Department of Education released the rules for this program, they stated that one of the partners must be a faith-based non-profit. AU wrote to the Governor of Ohio and to the Department of Education to explain that these rules were unconstitutional because they privileged religious organizations over non-religious ones. After AU’s letter, the Department of Education altered the rules to allow secular organizations to serve as the required non-profit partner.

**Texas School Fixes Constitutional Violation - November 2014, Magnolia, TX:** AU received complaints of numerous violations within a Texas school district. One of those violations involved crosses displayed on the walls of school classrooms and offices. After AU’s letter of complaint, those crosses were removed. AU continues to pursue the other unresolved violations.

**Public School Gets Reminder from AU That it Cannot Distribute Handouts with Proselytizing Bible Quotes - November 2014, Asheville, NC:** A public-school teacher

gave students a handout containing several pages of explicitly religious quotations. AU wrote to the school to explain that this is unconstitutional, and the school informed us that they had spoken with the teacher and that it would not happen again.

**AU Tells Maryland that It Must Also Take Atheists, Gays Camping - November 2014, Annapolis, MD:** AU received a complaint that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources was sponsoring a Boy Scouts troupe. This entailed the Department signing an agreement with the Boy Scouts that obligated the Department to enforce the Boy Scouts' policies that discriminate against atheists and gay people. We wrote to the Department to point out that the Department cannot legally agree to discriminate against anyone on the basis of religion or sexual orientation, and to ask that the Department end its association with the Scouts. The Department agreed, and is no longer affiliated with the Boy Scouts.

**Cross Display Shipped Out Thanks to AU - November 2014, Aguadilla, PR:** The chaplain at a Coast Guard base in Puerto Rico had erected a large cross on base grounds as part of an Easter service, and then declined to remove the cross. AU wrote to base command to explain that it is unconstitutional for the government to display a cross on its property, and to ask that the cross be removed. The base did not reply, but our complainant has informed us that the cross has been taken down.

**With AU's Aid, Satanic Temple Beats Government Discrimination - October 2014, Tallahassee, FL:** In December 2013, the Florida State Capitol building set aside a space in its rotunda for holiday displays created and erected by private citizens. A mix of displays, both religious and not, had been approved, but when the Satanic Temple (a rationalist group) requested permission to erect its own holiday display, government officials balked and refused to allow the display. The next year, AU wrote on behalf of the Satanic Temple to explain that when the government creates a public forum, it cannot deny access to that forum simply because it does not like a group's viewpoint. The state agreed and the Satanic Temple's display was allowed to be placed in the Capitol rotunda in 2014.

**UC Davis Withdraws Religious Class after AU Complaint - October 2014, Davis, CA:** A professor at the University of California Davis was teaching an overtly religious course entitled "Chaos, Complexity & Christianity." AU wrote to the University to object to the course on the grounds that it is unconstitutional for a public university to offer a course that explicitly endorses Christianity. The University agreed and has worked with the professor to ensure that his teaching is brought within constitutional guidelines.

**AU Convinces Delaware Park to Remove Biblical Playground Equipment - October 2014, Newark, DE:** AU received a complaint regarding a display in a public playground that depicted the story of Noah's Ark. We wrote to the Newark Parks and Recreation Department and explained that the display was unconstitutional. The Department agreed to remove the display.

**No More Public-School Fundraisers for Salvation Army, Thanks to AU - September 2014, Canal Winchester, OH:** A local middle school conducted fundraisers where students were granted permission to wear a hat to school if they donated to, or volunteered with, the Salvation Army. AU's letter explained that the law does not permit public schools to provide financial support for a religious organization, or to encourage students to donate or volunteer for a religious organization. The district agreed that the

Salvation Army will no longer be a beneficiary of school fundraisers, and that students will be encouraged to complete whatever community service they choose.

**State Declines to Subsidize Religious Ark Park after AU's Efforts - August 2014, Frankfort, KY:** The religious organization Answers in Genesis filed an application for tax incentives to assist in the financing of an evangelical Christian theme park, the Ark Encounter. AU wrote to state officials opposing this application on the grounds that Answers in Genesis discriminates in its hiring on the basis of religion and that it is inappropriate for the state to subsidize either Answers in Genesis' discriminatory practices or its ministry. The State agreed and denied the application.

**AU Puts an End to Memorial Displays Honoring Only Christian Veterans - August 2014, Milton, GA:** The City of Milton collected information from its residents about local veterans in order to create hundreds of memorial Latin crosses, each adorned with a veteran's name and an American flag. These crosses were displayed along major thoroughfares in the weeks surrounding Memorial Day and Veterans Day each year. AU wrote to the city to explain that these memorial displays honor only Christian veterans and unconstitutionally endorse Christianity. In response, the city decided that it will no longer create the religious memorials or place them on government property.

**No More Lord's Prayer at Council Meetings after AU Letter - June 2014, Tiffin, OH:** AU received a complaint that the Tiffin City Council opened meetings by having a councilmember recite the Lord's Prayer. Our letter explained that this practice is unconstitutional because the lawmakers themselves were reciting a single proscribed prayer, and because the practice favors Christianity and ensures that there is no diversity in prayergivers. The Council did not respond, but our complainant informed us that the invocation is now delivered by a chaplain and that it is always non-sectarian.

**AU Persuades City to Include Diversity in its Roster of City Council Prayergivers - June 2014, Huntsville, AL:** When the Huntsville City Council rescinded an invitation to a Wiccan priest to offer an invocation to open one of its meetings because residents objected to his faith, AU explained that the Constitution does not permit the council to exclude speakers or treat them differently because of their religious beliefs. After receiving AU's letter, the council invited the Wiccan priest to be part of a rotating schedule of invocation speakers for future meetings, and it also permitted an atheist to deliver an invocation.

**Council Drops Lord's Prayer, Is Forgiven of Its Trespasses Against the Constitution - June 2014, Hanahan, SC:** The Hanahan City Council opened each of its meetings with a councilmember-led recitation of the Lord's Prayer. AU wrote to the Council to explain that the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* does not permit legislatures to exclusively advance Christianity or to prescribe a particular prayer for official recitation. The council agreed to discontinue its practice and open council meetings with a moment of silence or by permitting a community resident of any religious persuasion to deliver an invocation of his or her choice.

**Military Removes Bible from Fallen-Soldier Memorial at AU's Urging - June 2014, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait:** AU received a complaint about Bibles being placed on the Missing Man Table—a formally set, but empty, table serving as a memorial to fallen soldiers—at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. Our letter explained that the use of the Bible created the

appearance that the memorial was meant to honor only Christian soldiers, and asked that the book be removed to make the memorial honor the sacrifice of all soldiers, regardless of religious belief. The military informed us that the Bible has been removed.

**AU Stops School Votes on Prayer - May 2014, Odessa, TX:** AU received a complaint regarding two Texas public schools that were holding a student vote on whether or not to include prayer at their graduation ceremonies. Our letter to the district explained that it is unconstitutional for school districts to allow students to vote on this topic and the district agreed, abolishing the prayer vote.

**AU Helps to Shoot Down Discriminatory Policy Proposal - May 2014, Roanoke, VA:** In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, a Roanoke County Supervisor proposed adopting a policy that would allow only Christians to offer prayers at Board of County Supervisors meetings. AU explained to the Board that the Supreme Court does not condone discrimination in prayergiver selection, and warned the Board that acting on this proposal would violate the Constitution. The remainder of the Board agreed and declined to act on the Supervisor's proposal.

**No More Prayers Over the Loudspeaker at Louisiana Public School, Thanks to AU - May 2014, Natchitoches, LA:** AU received a complaint about two schools in a Louisiana school district that read prayers over the loudspeaker every morning and included prayers at almost every school event. Our letter to the school district explained that these were egregious constitutional violations and asked the district to put a stop to them. Though we never received a formal response from the district, our complainant and one extremely irate local caller confirmed that the district has stopped the practices.

**Bible Back On the Shelf After AU Letter Opposing Religious Class - April 2014, Mustang, OK:** A school district was considering adopting an elective Bible curriculum created by noted evangelical Christian Steve Green. AU wrote to the district to explain that a course devoted solely to Bible study poses significant constitutional risks, and that Green had stated that the curriculum was designed to endorse the Bible's reliability and inerrancy. After AU's letter, the school district declined to adopt the program and tabled the proposal.

**Alaska Athletic Tournaments will No Longer Open with Prayer After AU's Letter - April 2014, Anchorage, AK:** The Alaska School Activities Association organized and ran wrestling tournaments for all public and some private schools in Alaska. In 2013, the Association held the state wrestling tournament at the campus of a private Christian school and allowed the event to open with a prayer. AU wrote to the Association to explain that its events were legally considered to be public-school events and thus could not begin with prayer. The Association agreed that Association events would no longer open with prayer.

**AU Stops Program That Forced Prostitutes into Church - April 2014, Phoenix, AZ:** The City of Phoenix partnered with churches and other religious organizations to sponsor Project ROSE, which threatened individuals suspected of prostitution with criminal prosecution if they declined to enroll in a religious program. AU strenuously objected to this program on the grounds that coercing attendance in religious programs under threat of incarceration is a flagrant violation of the separation of church and state. AU eventually

learned that the City had backed away from the program and was working with partners to develop an alternative program.

**AU Ends Mandatory Recitation of Lord’s Prayer at City-Sponsored Youth Basketball League - April 2014, Wichita, KS:** The coach of a city-sponsored youth-league recreational basketball team required his players to recite the Lord’s Prayer after every practice and game. AU wrote to the City to explain that this practice violated the Constitution, and to ask that the City stop the practice. The City agreed and informed the coach that he would no longer be allowed to include the prayer at this activity.

**AU Puts an End to Public-School Principal’s Prayers with Students, Staff - April 2014, Canton, GA:** The principal of a public high school led students in prayer at an assembly to commemorate the deaths of two of their fellow students, and routinely opened mandatory faculty meetings and staff luncheons with prayer. AU wrote to the school district that these practices were unconstitutional. After an investigation confirmed the facts in our letter, the district informed us that it had provided re-training for the principal to ensure that the behavior would not happen again.

**Kansas School District Will Ensure School Activities Don’t Promote Religion After AU Letter - April 2014, Maize, KS:** AU received complaints regarding two activities at a Kansas school district. The first was an assembly about the dangers of texting while driving, where white Latin crosses were distributed to students to symbolize deaths from texting behind the wheel. The second was a local church’s youth-ministry being given access to students for a promotional activity that encouraged students to attend church services. Our letter explained that these activities were unconstitutional and asked that the district refrain from including religious content in school activities in the future. The district agreed and promised to institute stricter vetting procedures for speakers and activities in the future.

**AU Letter Triggers Removal of Cross from Public-School Classroom - April 2014, Houston, TX:** A public-school teacher hung a cross in his sixth-grade classroom. AU wrote to the district to explain that this was a blatant constitutional violation. The district agreed and removed the cross.

**Texas County Removes Religious Lease Requirement at AU’s Request - March 2014, Somervell County, TX:** Somervell County decided to put a county-owned amphitheater up for lease, but the lease mandated the continuation of a religious passion-play that had been hosted at the amphitheater for many years. AU wrote to the County to explain that it could not legally require the lessee to continue to host a religious play. The County agreed to remove the requirement from the lease.

## 2013

**School District Stops Censoring Religious Website at AU’s Urging - December 2013, Gurnee, IL:** AU received a complaint that a public-school district’s computer system blocked student access to Scientology websites because it classified Scientology as a “cult,” while allowing free access to the websites of other religions. We wrote to the district to explain that government classification of a particular religion as a cult raises serious

constitutional questions, and that application of the district's website filtering policy in a discriminatory manner violates the Free Exercise Clause. In response, the district assured us that the filters no longer block Scientology websites.

**Public-School Principal Will No Longer Proselytize Staff, Thanks to AU - December 2013, Florence, SC:** An elementary-school principal regularly included religious messages in her emails to staff and engaged in prayer with the entire school staff at back-to-school meetings. AU wrote to the district, explaining that these actions were unconstitutional. The district responded and assured us that the behavior would not continue.

**Americans United Stops Use of Religious Videos in Court-Mandated Drug and Alcohol Program - December 2013, Arlington, VA:** The court-mandated Alcohol Safety Action Program of the Arlington County Sheriff's Office included videos with religious content. AU wrote to the Sheriff's Office to explain that the inclusion of religious material in a court-mandated government program was unconstitutional. We asked that the religious material be removed. The Sheriff's Office conducted an investigation and prohibited the continued use of the religious videos.

**Public-School Cheerleaders No Longer Use Religious Run-Through Signs Thanks to AU - November 2013, Livingston, TN:** AU received a complaint that cheerleaders at a Tennessee public school were using run-through signs at football games that had quotations from the Bible. We wrote to the school district to explain that school-sponsored display of religious messages at public-school events is unconstitutional and to ask that the district put a stop to the practice. The district agreed and no longer uses run-through signs with Bible quotes.

**After AU Letter, Gideon Checked Out and Left It No Doubt that Bible Distribution is Unconstitutional - November 2013, Floyd, VA:** An elementary school allowed the Gideons to distribute Bibles at the school's open house. AU wrote to the school district to explain that allowing distribution of Bibles on school grounds during a school function is unconstitutional. The district responded and agreed to end the Bible distributions.

**County Council No Longer Funding Child Evangelism Fellowship - November 2013, Tacoma, WA:** AU received a complaint that the Pierce County Council had included in its budget a seven-thousand-dollar grant to Child Evangelism Fellowship, a religious organization. We wrote to the Council to explain that the provision of government funds to this organization would be unconstitutional and to ask that it be removed from the budget. We did not receive an official response, but we learned that the item had been removed from the budget.

**AU Stops Middle-School Teacher from Proselytizing Students - October 2013, Walnut, CA:** A middle-school teacher was promoting Christianity to his students by presenting proselytizing religious messages verbally, through classroom displays, and on his clothing, despite having been previously reprimanded for distributing crosses to students. AU wrote to the school district to explain that these behaviors were unconstitutional and to ask that the district put a stop to them. The district has assured us that appropriate corrective action has been taken.



**AU Halts City Sponsorship of Prayer Breakfast - July 2013, Meridian, ID:** The City of Meridian sponsored an annual prayer breakfast and used the City's website to advertise the event. AU wrote to the City to explain that government sponsorship or advertising of a prayer breakfast is unconstitutional, and to ask that the City end its association with the event. In response, the City ended its sponsorship of the breakfast, which is now fully private, and no longer advertises or endorses the event.

**School Board Ditches Bible Literacy Course After AU Urges Caution - July 2013, Lewes, DE:** The Cape Henlopen School District Board of Education considered a proposal to add a Bible Literacy Course at its high school. AU wrote to the Board to explain that a course devoted solely to the study of the Bible would present a significant risk of unconstitutional religious instruction and to urge the Board to either reject the proposed course or to authorize a course on comparative religion instead. Though we received no formal reply, the Board did not approve the course.

**Charter School Unwittingly Raises Money for Religious Charity, Revises Procedures to Ensure it Will Not Happen Again - July 2013, Columbus, OH:** A charter school held a fundraiser for a religious organization and actively urged and incentivized students to give money. AU wrote to the school and to the Ohio Department of Education to explain that it is unconstitutional for a public school to raise money for organizations that will use those funds to engage in religious activity. The school responded that it had been unaware that the selected charity was religious, that it understood that public schools cannot raise money for religious activity, and that it would revise its procedures for vetting charities for future fundraisers.

**No More Prayer at Elementary School Events, Thanks to AU Letter - July 2013, Winder, GA:** AU received a complaint that a Thanksgiving event at a public elementary school had opened with a prayer delivered by an invited speaker. AU wrote to the school to object to a prayer at an official school event, and the school wrote back to assure us that the prayer had been unsolicited and that the staff had been instructed that this sort of incident should not happen again.

**USCIS Promises to Better Educate Employees About Immigrants' Right to Non-Religious Citizenship Oaths - June 2013, Washington, D.C.:** Discriminatory treatment of an atheist seeking an alternative citizenship oath led to the most recent in a series of letters AU has sent to the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, objecting to repeated violations of immigrants rights and requesting better training and education of USCIS officials. We received a reply directly from the USCIS Director agreeing with our position and promising to better educate USCIS employees about the legal requirements surrounding alternate citizenship oaths.

**School Board Kills Intelligent Design Proposal After AU Complaint - June 2013, Springboro, OH:** The Board of Education of Springboro Community Schools was considering a proposal to teach creationism in the public schools. AU wrote to the Board to explain that the inclusion of creationism in a public school curriculum is unconstitutional and to ask that the Board reject the proposal. Though we never received a formal response, the Board appears to have killed the proposal.

**AU Stops Revenge-Posting of Ten Commandments In Government Building - June 2013, Abingdon, VA:** AU received a complaint that a county board of supervisors had decided to hang a Ten Commandments display in a government building because a local private theater had displayed a mural of the Hindu deity Shiva and local Christian leaders had become upset. We wrote to the county to explain that posting a Christian religious document in a government building in retaliation for the private display of a mural depicting a non-Christian deity is unconstitutional. The county responded that it was convening a committee to investigate whether the Commandments could be posted legally, but our complainant informs us that the Commandments display was never put up and that the matter appears to have been quietly dropped.

**Public School No Longer Adorned With Permanent Church Signs - June 2013, Tampa, FL:** A middle school was renting space during the weekend to a church and displaying the church's signage on a permanent basis. AU wrote to the school to explain that, while it is permissible to rent space to the church, the school cannot permanently display the church's signage because it communicates a message of school endorsement of the church. The school did not formally respond, but our complainant informed us that the sign was removed.

**Various Public-School Holiday Practices That Promote Religion Stopped By AU Letter - June 2013, Frankfort, IL:** AU received a complaint about a variety of religion-promoting practices by the Frankfort Intermediate School, including: (1) broadcast of religious hymns over the loudspeaker during the holiday season; (2) incorporation of religious items and activities into multiple classrooms; (3) displaying a sign reading "Jesus is the Reason for the Season"; and (4) sending a letter home with students encouraging them to attend a back-to-school prayer rally at a church. AU wrote to the school district objecting to these practices, and received a response from the Superintendent indicating that the teachers responsible had been disciplined and that the principal at the time of the violations no longer worked at the school.

**A Rainbow Appears, Heralding the Removal of Noah's Ark Playground Equipment from a Public School - June 2013, Denton, TX:** An elementary school playground had a piece of equipment that portrayed the story of Noah's Ark through pictures and text. AU received complaints about the equipment and explained to the school in a letter that it is unconstitutional for a public school to display a Bible story on school grounds. The school removed the offending equipment.

**AU Stops Proselytizing Activities and Bible Distribution at Public School - May 2013, Blue Eye, MO:** AU received complaints about several religious activities at an elementary school, including a proselytizing speech by an invited speaker at the school's open house, the school's principal urging the open-house audience to attend church, and the distribution of Bibles to fifth-grade students. Upon receiving AU's letter of objection, the school district indicated that the proselytizing speaker will not be invited back and that there will be no further distribution of Bibles to students.

**Several Religious Graduation Issues Resolved by AU Letter - May 2013, Stokes County, NC:** The graduation ceremonies for several high schools within a particular school district for many years have featured Invocations and Benedictions delivered by students selected by the schools. After receiving complaints, AU wrote to the schools and asked that

these official prayers be removed from the ceremonies. The schools agreed to remove the prayers and that they would neither place limits on what other students speakers could say nor review their speeches, ensuring that the schools would not guide student speakers towards prayer. AU also learned that one of the schools sponsored a religious baccalaureate service and that its choir had previously been required to attend. That school has distanced itself from the event; it had earlier dropped the requirement that choir members attend..

**No More Invocations or Benedictions at High School Graduation - May 2013, Erie, PA:** North East High School asked its senior-class officers to deliver an invocation and benediction at graduation. As these terms commonly refer to prayers, AU wrote to the school to ask that they be discontinued. The school informed us that the terms were archaic and that the speeches had been purely secular for some years. AU reviewed copies of the most recent speeches and confirmed that they were indeed secular. In the meantime, the school agreed that it would stop calling these speeches invocation and benediction.

**AU Stops Graduation Prayers - May 2013, Saegertown, PA:** The senior-class officers at Saegertown High School were asked by school officials to choose a classmate to deliver an invocation and benediction at graduation. AU wrote to the school district asking that the prayers be discontinued. The district agreed to stop the prayers and to stop using the terms invocation and benediction, not only at Saegertown, but also at all schools in the district.

**School District Scraps Prayers at Graduation and Endorsement of Baccalaureate Ceremony at AU's Urging - May 2013, Erie, PA:** AU received a complaint that Northwestern Senior High invites a clergyperson to deliver an invocation and benediction at its graduation ceremonies, and that the school advertises a religious baccalaureate service for graduates using its website. AU wrote to the school district to ask that it remove prayer from its graduation ceremony and that the school end all involvement with advertising or planning the baccalaureate service. The school district agreed to both requests.

**Public School Reaffirms That Religion Not Necessary to Understanding Curriculum - May 2013, Boerne, TX:** A public school teacher posted a religious quote from St. Augustine—"Unless you believe, you will not understand"—on her official school website. Students and parents routinely accessed the website to obtain course information and assignments. AU wrote to the school to explain that the inclusion of a religious message on an official school website raised serious constitutional issues. The school removed the quote from the website.

**AU Stops Public-School Sponsorship of Baccalaureate and Prayers at School's Official Graduation - May 2013, Paris, KY:** AU received a complaint that Paris High School organizes a baccalaureate service at a local church and that students were required to attend in order to graduate. The school's normal graduation also featured an invocation and a benediction delivered by students. AU wrote to the school asking that it end its involvement with the baccalaureate, inform students that attendance at the service was not mandatory, and that it remove the prayers from its normal graduation ceremony. The school agreed to our requests.

**Student, With AU Assist, Ends Public-School Employee Prayers with Band and Football Team - April 2013, Statesboro, GA:** A high-school student complained of

several instances of school employees either encouraging students to pray or participating in prayer with students, particularly in the band and football programs. AU wrote to the school, explaining that such actions are unconstitutional and asking the school to put a stop to them. The school initially denied that faculty initiated or participated in prayers, but we then learned that the band prayers had stopped. At the beginning of the next school year, our complainant contacted us again with pictures of faculty members engaging in prayer with the football team. We contacted the school district again, and again they denied that they had done anything wrong. However, we learned that district officials had issued a communication to their employees that clarified what was permissible and what was not. We have received no further complaints since that time.

**AU Ensures That Prisoners Are Allowed A Broad Selection of Literature - April 2013, Alcorn, MS:** A county jail allowed inmates to have three books with them while in jail, but required that one of those books be a Bible. When AU wrote to object, the county sheriff contended that this was not the case. However, a website apparently affiliated with the jail prominently displayed the requirement. When AU pointed this out, the sheriff informed us that this website was not officially affiliated with the county, and had the offending portion of the website removed.

**School District Educates Administrators at AU's Request to Ensure No More Prayers at School Events - April 2013, Dallas, TX:** AU received a complaint that a local school district featured a prayer at its mandatory annual convocation for district faculty and staff, as well as for the president of the high-school's student council. The prayer at the most recent convocation was delivered by a member of the School Board. AU wrote to the district and asked that it ensure that future convocations are free of prayers or other religious content. The school district agreed with this request, and also conducted a legal seminar for school administrators on issues of religion in the public schools.

**Elementary School's Sign No Place for Religion, Says AU - April 2013, Springville, IN:** A sign displayed in front of Springville Elementary School often contained religious content, including phrases such as "Jesus Loves You." AU wrote to the school to explain that the school's promotion of religious messages on school property was unconstitutional. The school informed us that the messages have been removed.

**Town's Signs Welcome Back the Constitution at AU's Urging - February 2013, Barrackville, WV:** The sign in front of the Barrackville municipal building often featured religious content, including things like "Welcome to Barrackville, Jesus Welcomes You Back" and "Need Extra Money, Try Tithing . . . It Works!" In a letter to the town, AU explained that promotion of Christianity on the town's signage was unconstitutional. Though we received no formal response, our complainant tells us that the religious messages have stopped.

**Board of Education Replaces Prayer with Moment of Silence - January 2013, Oklahoma City, OK:** The Oklahoma City Public Schools' Board of Education regularly began its meetings with a prayer. AU wrote to the Board to inform it that it is unconstitutional for school boards to include prayer at their proceedings and to ask the Board to stop. The Board agreed to replace the prayer with a moment of silence.

## 2012

**City No Longer Displays Cross, Nativity on its Property After AU Advocacy - December 2012, Grand Haven, MI:** The City of Grand Haven displayed a 48-foot-tall cross on a hill that is public property. The city mechanically raised the cross for Sunday church services, Easter services, and a Christmas nativity display also erected on the hill. Over the course of two years, AU wrote several times to the City to protest these displays. City officials attempted to defend their practice by insisting that other symbols could be displayed on the cross's lift mechanism. But when local residents represented by AU requested the opportunity to put up other symbols, including ones depicting support for same-sex marriage, atheism, and women's rights, the city denied their request. Eventually, when it became clear that AU and its clients would not give up the fight, the City agreed to permanently convert the cross into an anchor and to remove the nativity scene.

**College Football May Be A Religion, But No More Weekly Chapel for One Team - December 2012, Fort Scott, KS:** A coach for the Fort Scott Community College football team instituted and led a weekly team activity called Friday Night Devotionals—a thirty-minute Christian religious worship program. AU received complaints about the program and wrote a letter of objection to the college. The college responded and agreed to stop the devotional program.

**With AU's Help, School Discovers it Can Launch Rowboats Without an Unconstitutional Prayer - December 2012, South Bristol, ME:** The South Bristol School has an annual project where students construct rowboats and then launch them during a ceremony at the end of the year. AU received complaints that the launching ceremony included a pastor, invited by the school, who delivered a prayer. After our letter of complaint, the school responded and agreed that future school-sponsored events will not feature prayer or religious activity. The school subsequently wrote to us and proposed keeping the prayer in the ceremony, but calling the event a "community event" and closing school while it took place. We responded that (1) closing the school and calling the event a "community event" does not erase the school's promotion and sponsorship of the event, and (2) closing school to facilitate student participation at a religious event would itself be a constitutional violation. The school finally agreed to simply drop any prayers from the ceremony.

**AU Stops Public-School Religious Graduation Ceremony at Church - December 2012, Marietta, GA:** An elementary school held its 2012 graduation ceremony at the Destiny Metropolitan Worship Church. The ceremony featured an extended sermon by the pastor that invoked the Bible and informed students about God's plan for their lives. AU wrote to the school and explained that public schools may not hold graduation ceremonies in a church and may not invite pastors to deliver religious messages at graduation. The school agreed to discontinue both practices.

**Public School Stops Football Coach from Praying With Team - December 2012, Minnetonka, MN:** A Minnetonka public school coach was leading the football team in prayer before games. AU wrote to the school to explain that public school officials may not lead students in prayer. The school district agreed and has put a stop to the practice.

**AU Educates Charter School on Graduation Prayer and Baccalaureate Sponsorship - September 2012, Ocoee, FL:** AU received a complaint that a public charter school's graduation ceremony featured two prayers delivered by a teacher, and that the school took steps to plan a baccalaureate service, although it did not go through with it. AU wrote to explain that the prayers were unconstitutional and that the school would have violated the Constitution had it held or sponsored a baccalaureate ceremony. The school responded to thank us for the information and to inform us that it had used our letter to update its policies and instruct its staff to no longer engage in these activities.

**Arlington Agrees that Brick-and-Mortar Church Not Necessary for License to Perform Marriages - September 2012, Arlington, VA:** A Wiccan High Priestess applied for a license to perform marriages in Virginia, but the license was denied because the Priestess did not serve a congregation with its own fixed-address building. AU wrote to the Court Clerk and explained that such a requirement unconstitutionally discriminated against Wiccans and other religious traditions that do not utilize traditional fixed-address congregations. We further pointed out that the requirement was inconsistent with Virginia law. The Priestess reapplied, and the Court Clerk then granted her application.

**Mayor Agrees that Constant Christian Prayers at Town-Hall Meetings A Bit Over-the-Top - September 2012, Lilburn, GA:** The mayor of Lilburn regularly said prayers to Jesus Christ during informational town-hall meetings with citizens. AU wrote to explain that such prayers were not permissible and to ask that they be discontinued. The mayor agreed not to pray at future town-hall meetings and not to deliver prayers at other, similar events.

**School Removes Prayers from Annual Senior Lunch After AU's Letter - September 2012, Midland, MI:** Bullock Creek High School holds an annual senior-lunch event for graduating students in the top 10% of the class. AU learned that this event had, in previous years, included a prayer delivered by the Superintendent, the Principal, or a student selected by a school administrator. AU wrote a letter of complaint and, in response, the school agreed that future senior-lunch events and other school events would be free of prayers or other religious content.

**AU Scuppers Prayers at Mandatory Election-Worker Training - August 2012, Bushnell, FL:** AU received a complaint that the local supervisor of elections included prayers at mandatory election-worker training sessions. We wrote to the supervisor to explain that such prayers are unconstitutional and to ask that she put a stop to them. The supervisor agreed to end the prayer practice.

**School Stops Financial Support for Religious Group - August 2012, Allentown, PA:** A high-school music production class conducted a fundraiser for a local religious homeless-services organization. AU wrote to the school to explain that school-district affiliation with and financial support of a religious organization is unconstitutional. The school agreed to have teachers undertake a more thorough vetting procedure for potential beneficiaries of school fundraisers to ensure that this does not happen again.

**AU Works With City to Fix Constitution Problems with Cross on Public Property - August 2012, Riverside, CA:** AU received complaints about a large cross standing in a public park owned by the City of Riverside. We wrote to the City to explain that it is

unconstitutional for the government to display a cross on public property. The City agreed to sell the property to a private buyer pursuant to a neutral bidding process at auction.

**At AU's Urging, City Declines to Put Crosses on Street Signs - August 2012,**

**McAlester, OK:** The City of McAlester placed cross displays on several street signs throughout the city, but then removed those displays after concerns were raised regarding separation of church and state. AU learned that the City Council would be considering a petition to return those crosses to its street signs and wrote to the Council to urge it to decline that request. After much deliberation, the Council declined to re-erect the cross displays.

**Charter School Agrees to Remove Religious Iconography from Rooms used for School Activities - August 2012, Riverside, CA:**

A charter school in California was using church property to host some of its official activities, including the administration of standardized tests. The rooms used by the church were replete with religious iconography. AU wrote to the school's administration to explain that charter schools must follow the same constitutional guidelines as any other public school, and asked them to ensure that students not be exposed to iconography in the future. The school responded and assured us that they would make certain that religious iconography would be covered and not visible to students in the future.

**School Agrees that Future Graduations Will Not Include Proselytizing Speeches - August 2012, Macon County, GA:**

AU received a complaint that the 2012 graduation ceremony of a county elementary school featured a proselytizing speech delivered by an Assistant Superintendent. Among other things, he noted that the school instills "the love of God" in students; stated "I know I'm not supposed to preach, but I'm a Christian first and an employee second;" and encouraged students to attend church. In response to our letter of complaint, the school system agreed to ensure that future graduations would not feature this type of activity.

**Charter School Removes Religious Iconography From Classrooms at AU's Request - August 2012, The Woodlands, TX:**

A charter school in Texas held its classes in a church which included uncovered religious iconography in the common areas used by the school. AU wrote a letter of complaint to the school and to the Texas Education Agency. The school subsequently agreed to remove all iconography in common areas and classroom areas used by students.

**Election-Worker Trainings No Longer Begin With Prayer - August 2012, Bushnell,**

**FL:** The Supervisor of Elections in Bushnell made it a practice to begin election-worker training sessions with a prayer. AU wrote to the Supervisor and informed her that it is unconstitutional for a government employee to include a prayer as part of such a training session. After consultation with attorneys, the Supervisor agreed to stop the prayer practice.

**AU Letter Removes Buddhist Religious Monument From National Park Property -**

**July 2012, Albuquerque, NM:** AU received a complaint about a Buddhist stupa that was displayed at the Petroglyph National Monument. The stupa was on the land when the land was purchased by the federal government, and had been maintained there since. AU asked that the stupa be moved to private property. The Department of the Interior investigated

and concluded that the display of the stupa on government land was unconstitutional. The government accordingly transferred the stupa to the Albuquerque Buddhist community.

**Letter From AU Ensures No Future Religious Assemblies at Public School - June 2012, Missoula, MT:** The Strength Team participated in an assembly hosted by an elementary school. They used the assembly as an opportunity to invite students to an after-school church event. AU wrote to the school to explain that allowing the Strength Team to use an official school event to solicit student participation in a religious activity violates the Establishment Clause. The school did not respond to our letter, but there have been no further such assemblies.

**School Assures AU That Coaches Will Not Wear Religious Shirts at School Events - June 2012, Buckeye, AZ:** High-school track coaches wore to a track meet t-shirts adorned with the logo of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (which contains a Latin cross) alongside the name of the school. AU wrote to the school to explain that it is unconstitutional for public-school employees to promote a religious organization. The school investigated and explained that the shirts had been worn on only one occasion because they were a bright color and were intended to help students locate the coaches. The school assured us it would not happen again.

**Cross Formerly on Public Property Sold to Private Party Who May or May Not Have Nineteen Children - June 2012, Dugger, IN:** AU received a complaint about a large cross, inscribed with the phrase “Jesus Saves,” that stood on public land at the entrance to the Town of Dugger. We wrote to the town to explain that it is unconstitutional for the town to display a religious symbol and message on government property. The Town organized an auction and sold the property, at fair market value, to a private party.

**City Ends Sponsorship and Funding of Religious Event at AU’s Urging - June 2012, St. Charles, MO:** The City of St. Charles organized, funded, and advertised a Christmas Festival that included a live re-enactment of the story of Christ’s birth. AU wrote to the City to explain that City sponsorship of this religious activity is unconstitutional and to ask that the City remove the activity from the Festival. Although the City did not remove the re-enactment entirely, it did revoke all government funding of the event and took steps to clarify that the re-enactment was sponsored by a private group and not by the City.

**Public School Will No Longer Take Students to DinoSpace Museum - June 2012, Fort Leonard Wood, MO:** The DinoSpace Museum in Camdenton, MO is a creationist-themed “science” museum geared towards children. AU learned that an army-run school for children of soldiers stationed at Fort Leonard Wood took a field trip to the museum. We wrote a letter of complaint about this event. The Army Installation Management command informed us that the organizers of the field trip were not aware of the museum’s focus before the trip and agreed that no future field trips would be made to the museum. They also agreed to be more careful in evaluating future field-trip locations.

**Judges Expand Probation Program to Allow Participants to Meet With Non-Religious Community Members, Instead of Only Pastors - June 2012, Portland, OR:** AU received a complaint regarding a program under which Multnomah County judges—as part of a joint venture between the court, the County District Attorney’s office,



and the City of Portland—conditioned criminal offenders’ eligibility for probation on attendance of meetings with local pastors. In response to our letter, the program was expanded so that offenders are now provided the opportunity to meet with a variety of individuals, including non-religious community members, and all participants are prohibited from proselytizing as part of the program.

**AU’s Warning Prompts Public School to Investigate Religious and Sexual Harassment of Student - May 2012, Bristol, TN:** A parent complained that a teaching assistant at her daughter’s middle-school had given her daughter a note instructing her to read certain Bible verses which are often cited to communicate religious disapproval of same-sex relationships. AU objected, explaining to the school that this action violated the separation of church and state and the school district’s policies against sexual harassment. The school quickly initiated an investigation, and the complainant has told us that there have been no further problems.

**AU Letter Stops Public-School Coach from Praying With Students - May 2012, Williamsburg, VA:** A high-school junior-varsity baseball coach solicited and participated in student-led prayer before games. AU wrote to the school to explain that it is unconstitutional for public-school officials to solicit prayer from students or to participate in prayer with students. The school investigated the matter and spoke with coaches about constitutional requirements. AU has not received any further reports of misconduct.

**AU Stops Prayers at Public-School Music Competitions - May 2012, Hamburg, PA:** The Pennsylvania Music Educators Association is an organization utilized by the State of Pennsylvania to organize and run its public school honors choir competitions. AU received a complaint that certain events run by the Association included official prayers. We wrote to the Association to inform them that it is unconstitutional to include prayers in government events. The Association agreed and will no longer allow prayers at its public-school events.

**County Legislatures Replaces Prayer With Moment of Silence at AU’s Request - May 2012, Perryville, AR:** The Perry County Quorum Court routinely opened its meetings with sectarian prayer. AU wrote to them to explain that such prayer was unconstitutional, and the Quorum Court agreed to instead open meetings with a moment of silence and recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Student Enlists AU’s Help to Stop Prayer at Public-School Graduation - May 2012, Poteet, TX:** A student at Poteet High School contacted AU to complain that the school was planning to include school-sponsored invocation and benediction prayers at an upcoming graduation ceremony. Moreover, school administrators had instructed two students that they were expected to deliver these prayers, and that the students had to submit the proposed prayers for approval by the school. AU objected to this practice, explaining that there were numerous constitutional problems with it, not the least of which was coercing students into delivering prayers against their will. The school attempted to rectify the problem by informing the students who were set to deliver the prayers that they could opt out and be replaced if they did not wish to participate in the prayer. AU wrote a second letter, arguing that this was an unacceptable solution because it conditioned the students’ right to speak at graduation upon their willingness to write and deliver a prayer. The

school ultimately changed the invocation and benediction to “opening and closing remarks” and removed the requirement that those remarks be prayers.

**Baccalaureate Ceremony Will No Longer Be Sponsored By Public School - May 2012, Irving, TX:** AU received complaints about a number of issues at the Irving Independent School District, such as district sponsorship of a baccalaureate ceremony. After receiving AU’s letter of complaint, the school conducted an investigation and addressed AU’s concerns, putting a stop to the sponsorship of the baccalaureate, among other things.

**City Listens to AU Instead of Liberty Counsel on Holiday Display Policy - May 2012, Santa Monica, CA:** AU learned that the religious-right organization Liberty Counsel had contacted the City of Santa Monica regarding the City Council’s deliberations over whether to continue to allow holiday displays in a public park during the holidays. AU wrote to the Council to debunk Liberty Counsel’s legal arguments and to urge the Council to either maintain the then-current display policy — which provided equal opportunity for anyone to place a holiday display in the park, regardless of whether the display had a religious viewpoint — or to close the forum altogether. The City rejected Liberty Counsel’s advice and prohibited all displays.

**Elementary School Removes Story About Christmas Ass at AU’s Urging - April 2012, Amana, IA:** A local elementary school was screening a movie called “Nestor the Long-Eared Christmas Donkey” in a music class. The film features scenes that depict the birth of Jesus Christ. AU wrote to the school and explained that public schools may not show religious films to their students. The school spoke with the teacher responsible and agreed to monitor its classes for religious content. As of December 2012, the school has kept its promise and no religious activities have been incorporated into classroom instruction.

**AU Convinces School Board to Stop Opening Meetings With Prayer - April 2012, Fayetteville, GA:** The Board of Education for Fayette County Schools was opening its meetings with a prayer. AU wrote to the school district to explain that it is unconstitutional for a school board to open its meetings with prayer. The Board voted to replace the prayer with a moment of silence.

**School Will No Longer Use Christian Church to Host Events - April 2012, Maumelle, AR:** Pine Forest Elementary School held a school play in a nearby church. Large crosses hung over the stage used for the play and the church’s entrance. The school also listed the church as its emergency evacuation point in the school handbook. After AU’s letter of complaint, the school agreed not to use this or other churches for future school events and to use a next-door community center as its primary evacuation point.

**No More Religious Motivational Speakers for Public School after AU Letter - April 2012, Bakersfield, CA:** Stockdale High School held a mandatory assembly featuring a speaker from Sports World, a religious organization that sends former professional athletes into the public schools to discuss their struggles with drug and alcohol addiction with students. Here, the speaker told students that he had overcome his addictions through faith in Jesus Christ. AU wrote a letter to the school district explaining that it is unconstitutional for the school to allow religious proselytizing or the inclusion of religious

messages in a school-sponsored assembly or other school event. The school agreed, and has decided to no longer use Sports World or other similar organizations to provide assembly speakers.

**University Will No Longer Use Promotional Event Based on Faith after AU's Complaint - April 2012, Cleveland, OH:** Cleveland State University advertised a "Faith & Family Day" event at its basketball arena, including in the advertisement nine Christian crosses. AU wrote to the university to explain that it is unconstitutional to affiliate a university event with religion. The University responded, explaining that a third-party advertising firm had created this advertisement without the University's consent and that it would not happen again.

**Catholic Group Rejects Government Funds, Workout Videos, Because of Restrictions Against Religious Spending Demanded by AU - March 2012, Fonda, NY:** The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors gave a tourism grant to a Catholic shrine to support the shrine's celebration of the canonization of the shrine's patron saint. In response to AU's letter, the County considered a resolution that would have restricted the use of the grant money to secular items. AU sent a follow-up letter explaining that any money given to a religious shrine to support a religious event would unconstitutionally support religious activity. The shrine ultimately declined the grant because it could not agree to the restrictions on the use of the money.

**Religious Content Removed From Public-School Assembly at AU's Request - February 2012, Weston, WV:** A public middle school and high school planned to hold a musical assembly — featuring a religious band with a singer known to regularly give speeches about his religious beliefs during performances — during the school day. AU sent a letter explaining that the inclusion of religious content in a school assembly violates the U.S. Constitution, and the school acted to ensure that the assembly was completely secular and that there were reasonable alternative activities for students who did not wish to attend the assembly.

**AU Letter Stops School-Teacher Participation in Student-led Religious Activity - January 2012, Honea Path, SC:** AU received a complaint that two public school teachers were participating in religious activity at a See You at the Pole event. The school investigated after receiving AU's letter of complaint and agreed that teachers and other school personnel would be limited to supervising student behavior at future student-led See You at the Pole events.

**School Stops Coaches Praying With Students and Loudspeaker Prayer at Football Games - January 2012, Mountain Grove, MO:** A public high-school's football coach prayed with players prior to games, and the school sponsored a prayer over the loudspeaker just before the start of each game. AU wrote to the school to explain that both practices are unconstitutional. The school agreed and has put a stop to both practices.

**No More Gideon Bible Distribution at Public School After AU Letter - January 2012, Rogers, AR:** The Rogers Public Schools were allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles to students in fourteen elementary schools throughout the district. The school district, in response to AU's letter of complaint, agreed that the Gideons would no longer be allowed to distribute.

**AU Ends Bible Distribution at Public School - January 2012, Reedley, CA:** AU received a complaint that a middle school was allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles to students as they entered the school after getting off the school bus. AU wrote to the school district and objected to this practice, explaining that allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles on school property during the school day was unconstitutional. The school agreed to put an end to the distributions.

**Public School Removes Religious Affirmation from Student Creed after AU Letter - January 2012, Westminster, SC:** The West Oak High School student handbook features an official student creed, which included the affirmation “I believe in faith, for without it, I am a lost soul in a lost world.” AU objected to this affirmation, explaining that it is unconstitutional for a public school to inject religious affirmations into school curriculum and culture. Subsequent to our letter, the school district removed the religious affirmation from the student creed.

**School District Agrees With AU That It Must Take Steps to Ensure No More Religious Assemblies - January 2012, Denton, TX:** A public school hosted an assembly featuring a religious group known as Team Impact. Although the in-school presentation was secular, the group used the assembly to invite students to a religious after-school event. AU wrote to the school district to explain that it is unconstitutional for the school to allow Team Impact to use a school event to invite students to a religious activity. The school district agreed with our assessment, and has spoken with the principal of the school to ensure that this does not happen again.

**AU Gets School to Remove Religious Content From Assembly - January 2012, Douglas, GA:** AU received a complaint regarding a planned public-school assembly featuring Dean Sikes, an evangelical pastor who speaks at schools around the South. His presentations commonly feature proselytizing and religious messages, so AU wrote to school officials to alert them to this pattern and to caution them not to allow Sikes to proselytize students. School officials agreed, and our complainant reported that there was no religious content in the assembly.

## 2011

**Religious Displays Removed From Classroom - December 2011, Mercedes, TX:** A high-school teacher displayed two items in his public-school classroom: a nativity scene and a doll of the Grinch. During class he pointed to the nativity and declared that it was for those who shared his Christian faith, and then pointed to the Grinch and said that it was for all those who did not. AU wrote a letter of complaint that explained that it is unconstitutional for a public-school teacher to erect religious displays and to make disparaging comments about minority religions. The School District promptly removed the displays and assured us that they had discussed the matter with the teacher.

**Merger Between University Hospital and Catholic Hospital Derailed with Assist from AU - December 2011, Louisville, KY:** AU learned that the University of Louisville Hospital planned to participate in a merger with a Catholic hospital. This would have resulted in a public hospital being subject to religious rules and restrictions on reproductive healthcare followed by Catholic health-care providers. AU wrote to Kentucky’s Governor

and Attorney General and warned them that the merger would be unconstitutional. The Governor declined to approve the merger, in part because of the church-state separation concerns AU raised.

**Crosses Removed From University Property After AU Complaint - November 2011, San Antonio, TX:** The City of San Antonio provided funds to a private contractor to create a tower to serve as a marker for the entrance of Texas A&M's San Antonio campus, and Texas A&M agreed to allow its seal to be displayed on the tower. When built, the tower featured three crosses on each face, just above Texas A&M's seal. AU wrote to the City and Texas A&M, explaining that it is unconstitutional for the government to affiliate itself with religion by financing a building that displays religious iconography and by associating a public university's seal with that iconography. The crosses were then removed from the tower.

**AU Stops Principal's Prayers at Elementary School Events - November 2011, Houma, LA:** AU received a complaint that the principal of an elementary school in Houma, Louisiana began an open-house event with prayer. The principal agreed to put a stop to the inclusion of prayers at future school events after AU sent a letter of complaint.

**AU Persuades Sheriff's Office to Remove Jesus Christ Statue from Jail - October 2011, Binghamton, NY:** Upon entering the Broome County Jail, visitors were confronted with a statue of Jesus Christ. AU wrote to the Broome County Sheriff's Office, which manages the Jail, and explained that it is unconstitutional for the government to erect such religious displays on government property. The Sheriff's Office removed the statue.

**Americans United Puts an End to Proselytizing School Assemblies - October 2011, Flippin, AR:** The Flippin School District required all middle- and high-school students to attend an assembly featuring a group of former athletes calling themselves Crossfire. The group described their personal salvation through Jesus Christ and invited the students to an after-school religious event. AU objected to this assembly, explaining that it is unconstitutional for the school to allow outsiders to proselytize students or use a school assembly to invite students to a religious event. In response, the School District said that this group would not return and that the District would follow a stricter content vetting procedure in the future to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

**Religious School Displays Removed, Thanks to AU - September 2011, Jamestown, TN:** A public elementary school had numerous religious displays posted on the walls of common areas and classrooms. After AU's letter of complaint, the displays were removed and the school committed to ensuring that they would stay removed.

**AU Puts an End to School-Organized See You At the Pole Event - September 2011, East Hanover, PA:** AU wrote to a public elementary school regarding a school-organized See You at the Pole event. Students would have been forced to attend the event, which took place during the school day, unless their parents returned a signed opt-out form handed out mere days before the event was to take place. Following AU's letter, the school changed the event to be entirely voluntary without the need for a form, and it moved the event to occur before the beginning of the school day.

**AU Persuades School to Discontinue Bible Readings In Daily Announcements - August 2011, Bloomfield, IN:** Each week a student religious club would submit a “weekly Bible verse” to be read as part of a public high-school’s morning announcements by the school’s principal. AU wrote to the school district to explain that it is unconstitutional for a public school to read religious messages to its students over the intercom and that the religious club did not have the right to inject religious messages into the announcements. The school district responded and agreed to remove the religious content from the morning announcements and to limit school clubs to informing students of the facts about club meetings.

**AU Achieves Equal Treatment for Non-Religious Organizations Using Public Facilities - July 2011, Warren County, KY:** The Warren County Parks and Recreation Department had published a schedule of fees for the rental and use of park facilities. The fees were cheaper for churches than for everyone else. AU wrote to the Department to explain that it is a constitutional violation to provide preferential pricing for religious organizations, and to ask that everyone be treated equally. The Parks and Recreation Department then ended the preferential pricing.

**Americans United Puts An End to City’s Religious Messages on Vehicle Registration Stickers - July 2011, Blue Island, IL:** The City of Blue Island chose to require all residents to place a “St. Benedict Roman Catholic Church: 150 Years” sticker in the windshield of their vehicles. AU objected to this practice, explaining that endorsement of a religious institution on government documents is a constitutional violation. After receipt of AU’s letter, the Mayor issued an executive order stating that no religious institutions shall be placed on vehicle stickers in the future.

**AU Stops Sermons at Public-School Graduations - July 2011, Macon County, NC:** AU learned that a North Carolina public-school graduating class had invited a preacher to deliver their graduation address. The preacher delivered a sermon replete with references to the evil power of the Devil and to the Bible. AU wrote to the school district to explain that the inclusion of prayer and sermonizing at a public-school graduation is unconstitutional, and that the violation is not fixed merely because the students selected the speaker by vote. The school district responded and assured us that the speaker was allowed in error and that the school district would more vigilantly apply its vetting process in the future.

**AU Puts an End to School’s Preferential Treatment of Religious Group - July 2011, Wilmington, CA:** A public school in Los Angeles had allowed a student religious club to post advertisements for its events on the school’s front gate when other groups had not been allowed to do so. The school also let that club host an after-school religious festival, during which the sounds of the religious activities of the festival were amplified so loudly that working teachers and students participating in other after-school activities could hear them. AU sent a letter of complaint explaining that both the preferential access to the front gate and the amplification of the religious festival so that non-participants were forced to listen crossed constitutional boundaries. The school district responded, explaining that it would clarify that the front gate was available to all student-group advertisements equally, and agreeing to ensure that noise amplification for future events would be kept to a reasonable level.

**AU Obtains Removal of Church Advertisement from Public-School Lawn - June 2011, Durham, NC:** AU received a complaint that a public school had allowed a church to place a permanent sign on the school's front lawn advertising church services. The school removed the sign after AU sent a letter of complaint that explained that allowing a permanent advertisement sent the impermissible message that the school endorsed the church's activities.

**School Discontinues Prayer Breakfasts After Letter from AU - May 2011, New Bern, NC:** A public-school principal was hosting prayer-breakfasts for staff and including religious messages in emails to staff and in other official school communications. AU complained to the school district about these practices. Although the school did not officially respond to our letter, our complainant has assured us that the principal has discontinued these activities.

**AU Cautions School Not to Teach Religious Stories as Truth - May 2011, Show Low, AZ:** During a music class at a public elementary school, a music teacher showed a video depicting the story of Noah's Ark and, in class discussion of the video, told students that the story was true. AU wrote a letter of complaint to school district officials, who responded that they had discussed the matter with the teacher and instructed her not to use religious materials in class in the future.

**Americans United Stops City from Promoting Religious Fundraiser - April 2011, Murfreesboro, TN:** The City of Murfreesboro posted on its website an advertisement for a "Mayor's Prayer Breakfast" that was meant to raise money for a religious organization. AU wrote to the city to point out that the government may not endorse or participate in prayer breakfasts or religious fundraisers. The City agreed, removing the advertisement and assuring AU that the event was privately sponsored and that the City was not officially involved.

**AU Cuts Religious Content from High-School Sports Programs - April 2011, Oconee County, SC:** Several sports teams at a public high-school were employing "Team Chaplains" who led students in prayer. Additionally, the wrestling team's handbook contained Biblical quotations. AU wrote to the school to explain that both of these practices are unconstitutional. The school district subsequently hosted a meeting at the district office for all middle- and high-school principals and athletic directors. At this meeting, district officials instructed attendees that they could not have team chaplains or include religious material in any communications with students.

**AU Puts an End to Public-School Officials' Religious Messages - April 2011, Florence, SC:** AU received a complaint that several public-school officials were sending out overtly religious emails to school staff and were conducting prayers at faculty meetings. The school district's Board of Trustees voted to put a stop to these practices following AU's letter of complaint.

**County Jail Removes Easter Cross from Website, Thanks To AU - April 2011, Bowling Green, KY:** In the weeks leading up to the Easter holiday, the website of the Warren County Jail contained a prominent image of a cross emblazoned with the message "Easter Blessings." AU wrote to the County Jailer to explain that the display of the cross

endorsed religion and to ask that the cross be removed. Several days after our letter was sent, the cross was removed from the website.

**Americans United Stops Religious Indoctrination at Public-School Flag-Folding Ceremonies - March 2011, Crossville, TN:** At a public-school Veterans Day event, several fifth-grade students participated in a flag-folding ceremony during which they recited statements purporting to explain the meaning behind each of the thirteen folds of the flag. Some of those statements included religious content, such as “The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.” AU wrote to the school district to point out that the inclusion of such religious material was unconstitutional and to request that any future flag-folding ceremonies use a wholly secular script. The school district agreed to abide by the Constitution at future ceremonies.

**AU Puts an End to Evangelizing School Assemblies - March 2011, Canton, GA:** A Georgia public-school district hosted an assembly by an evangelical group known as Team Impact. Although the in-school presentation was secular, Team Impact used the event as an opportunity to invite students to an after-school evangelical revival, where attendees were aggressively proselytized. AU wrote to the school district to explain that allowing a religious group to use an official public-school event to recruit attendees to a church service is tantamount to the school itself inviting students to attend the religious service. The school district agreed in a written response to AU, explaining that they had instructed Team Impact not to invite students to the after-school event, that Team Impact had ignored this instruction, and that the school district had canceled all remaining assemblies with Team Impact and would not be bringing Team Impact back for assemblies in the future.

**Americans United Letter Spurs Removal of Religious Icon from Post Office - February 2011, Broomall, PA:** AU received a complaint that a cross was being displayed in the public areas of a post office. Writing to the postmaster, AU explained that the display of religious iconography in the public areas of government offices violates the separation of church and state, and asked that the cross be removed. Though we did not receive an official response to the letter, our complainant has confirmed the removal of the cross.

## 2010

**AU Secures Removal of Proselytizing Displays from Polling Places - December 2010, Oklahoma City, OK:** A county election board used a church as a polling place in the 2010 elections. The church erected several proselytizing displays in the voting area. Upon receiving complaints, county election officials responded that because the church was private property, they were not allowed to remove the religious content. AU wrote to the election board and explained that an Oklahoma state statute clearly authorized election officials to remove the proselytizing messages, and that if election officials were unwilling to do so, then churches that declined to remove such messages should not be used as polling places. The election board responded and agreed that such messages would be removed in the future.



**Americans United Ensures Public School's Neutrality on Religion - November 2010, Andale, KS:** The head of AU's Kansas chapter alerted us that a local public school district had published a Strategic Plan that proclaimed the District's mission as "Individual communities united by faith, family, and shared moral values." The document also contained a list, under the heading "Beliefs," including the item "God gives meaning and purpose to life." We wrote a letter to the school district explaining that the Constitution requires that government remain neutral on questions of religious belief, and that tying faith and belief in God to the beliefs and goals of the school district violated that core constitutional principle. The school district conducted an investigation and agreed to remove the statements from school publications.

**AU Persuades School to Avoid Appearance of Endorsing Religion - November 2010, Bristol, TN:** AU received a complaint that a middle school was inviting a group called the "Tater Patch" to speak to students. The Tater Patch is a religious group and its presentations are uniformly proselytizing. AU wrote to the school to explain that it is unconstitutional for the school to invite a group to proselytize students. The school responded, explaining that there had been a misunderstanding and that the group had been invited by a student club and not the school, but acknowledging that the way that the event had been structured would make it appear that it had been school sponsored. The school agreed to take steps to ensure that students understand that any future visits by the group are not sponsored by the school and that students are not required to attend.

**AU Puts an End to Church Advertisement at Public School - November 2010, Chicago, IL:** An elementary school allowed a church to place an advertisement for worship services on one of the school's entrance doors. The advertisement was left in place on the school's door even when school was in session, creating the appearance that the school and the church were in partnership. Following AU's letter of complaint, the school removed the advertisement from the door.

**AU Spurs School to Remove Religious Statement of Beliefs from Website - October 2010, Clinton, MS:** On its website, a public school district listed a set of statements under the heading "We Believe." One of those statements of belief read, "Faith in God is the cornerstone of our community." AU wrote to the school district to explain that one of the primary responsibilities of government is to maintain a neutral stance on questions of religious belief, and that an official statement tying belief in God to the well-being of the community struck at the very heart of the Constitution's commands. Subsequently, the school district removed the religious statement.

**AU Persuades Judge to Discontinue Courtroom Prayers - October 2010, Covington, GA:** A Superior Court judge was routinely inviting local clergy to open his courtroom sessions with prayer. AU wrote to the judge, explaining that it is unconstitutional to begin courtroom sessions with prayer, and respectfully asking that the practice be discontinued. The judge agreed, informing us that he would stop the prayers.

**Kindergarten Discontinues Christian Event, Thanks to AU - October 2010, Burnsville, NC:** A parent contacted AU after attending a "Kindergarten Celebration" at their child's elementary school. The event's program featured a prayer and Bible verse, and the students participating in the event were directed to pray and to sing religious songs, including "Jesus Loves Me." AU wrote to the school district to explain that this event was

clearly unconstitutional. The district agreed, and assured AU that it would not happen again.

**AU Cuts Religious Material from School Choir Curriculum - September 2010, Brea, CA:** AU received a complaint that a high-school choir director had assigned two contemporary Christian gospel songs as featured performances and that he had assigned students to read his novel, which contained his personal religious philosophies, over the summer. Following AU's letter of complaint about these practices, the school district informed us that they would stop using one of the gospel songs and the novel, and that they would edit the lyrics of the other song to remove all religious references.

**AU Ensures Public School Tradition is Religiously Neutral - July 2010, Stevensville, MT:** Graduating seniors from a public school district were treated to a "Senior's brunch" at a local Masonic Lodge as part of an annual district tradition. The brunch included a prayer and a recruitment speech for the Lodge that stressed that non-religious people may not join. AU objected to the prayer and to the recruitment speech, explaining that they were unconstitutional. The school district wanted to maintain the tradition, and agreed to remove the prayer and the recruitment speech from the event.

**Prayer Removed from School Graduations, Thanks to AU - July 2010, Goldsboro, NC:** Invocations and benedictions were being included as official parts of public high-school graduation ceremonies. The district agreed to end the practice after AU explained that the practice violated the Constitution.

**AU Achieves Removal of Religious Mural from Postal Facility - July 2010, Jacksonville, OR:** AU received a complaint about a mural containing a religious message painted above the entrance to a contract postal-unit. After receipt of our letter of complaint, the Postal Service instructed the contract postal-unit to remove the mural.

**AU Puts an End to Evangelization During the School Day - July 2010, Boerne, TX:** A public school district allowed volunteers from a religious group known as the Pais Project to visit schools within the district and, according to news reports, to communicate religious messages to students during the school day. AU wrote to the district and explained that it is unconstitutional for the school to allow volunteers to proselytize students during the school day. The school spoke with the volunteers and instructed them to cease proselytizing or communicating religious messages to students during the school day.

**AU Bars Teacher from Leading Students in Prayer - July 2010, Meadville, MS:** Newspapers in Mississippi carried reports of a high-school math teacher who was fired from her position for praying with students in class, but who was then reinstated. In a letter, AU informed the district that it had both the duty to prohibit teachers from praying with students and the authority to discipline employees who flouted the district's prohibition. Subsequent to the letter, the teacher resigned her position rather than be fired for continuing to pray with students.

**AU Cautions School Against Teaching Religion through Meditation Program - June 2010, San Francisco, CA:** AU received reports that a San Francisco public school was operating a Transcendental Meditation program. AU contacted school officials, expressed concern that certain elements of the program were potentially unconstitutional,

and requested that school officials ensure that the program did not communicate religious principles or messages to students. The school investigated the program and assured AU that the program did not contain religious content.

**AU Secures Non-Religious Setting for High School Graduations - June 2010, Brooklyn, NY:** A public charter school was holding its graduation ceremonies in a church sanctuary that featured several religious symbols. AU wrote a letter to school officials explaining that it is unconstitutional to hold a public school's graduation ceremony in a church. The principal responded and said that they were unable to move this year's graduation ceremony because of time constraints, but agreed that they would cover the crosses and other religious iconography and that they would use a secular venue for future graduations.

**AU Achieves Removal of Religious Prison Mural - June 2010, San Quentin, CA:** An inmate at a state penitentiary reported that the prison allowed a large painting of the words "John 3:16" to be displayed on a wall inside the prison. Following AU's letter expressing concern that this communicated a message of religious endorsement, the painting was removed.

**AU Puts an End to Prayer at School Events - May 2010, Dahlonga, GA:** Teachers and administrators at a public high school either led prayer or invited students to lead prayer at a variety of school-sponsored events. In response to a complaint that the school's upcoming graduation ceremony would also include prayer, AU cautioned the school district that school-sponsored prayers are unconstitutional. The district agreed to ensure that there would be no further prayers at district functions.

**AU Stops Teacher from Proselytizing to Kindergartners - May 2010, Palm Bay, FL:** AU received a complaint about a public-school teacher who was praying with her kindergarten students at snack time, displayed a picture of Jesus on her desk, and hung on classroom walls posters featuring prayers. We wrote to school officials explaining that it is unconstitutional for teachers to pray with their students or for them to display religious messages or symbols in the classroom. The district responded, assuring us that they had instructed the teacher to stop praying with students and to remove the religious displays from the classroom. They also informed us that they would educate the staff about these issues at the next staff meeting.

**Graduation Prayer Replaced with Moment of Silence, Thanks to AU - May 2010, Exeter, CA:** AU learned that a public-school district in California decided to allow the senior class at the high school to vote on whether prayer would be included at the graduation ceremonies. We wrote to district officials to explain that public schools cannot include prayers as part of public high-school graduations, whether by vote or otherwise. We received a response letting us know that the school district revoked their previous decision and instituted a moment of silence in lieu of a prayer.

**Americans United Spurs Removal of Religious Displays from Public School - April 2010, Oliver Springs, TN:** AU received a complaint that a public-school teacher was displaying crosses on her classroom desk and that the school's principal also had a Bible sitting on his desk. We wrote to school district officials to explain that it is unconstitutional to display religious items in plain view of students in a public school, and to ask that the

items be removed. The principal responded, saying that the items had been promptly removed and the issue addressed at a faculty meeting.

**AU Persuades City to Stop Sponsoring Religious Ceremony - April 2010, King, NC:** AU learned that the city of King, NC hosted an annual 9/11 Memorial Service. The service was replete with religious content, including a closing benediction from the Mayor. We wrote to city officials to explain that it is unconstitutional for the government to sponsor a religious event and for government officials to participate in religious events in their official capacity. The Mayor sent a response assuring us that in the future the event would be wholly privately funded and sponsored, and that he would attend such an event only in his personal capacity.

**AU Cuts Religious Music from Prisoners' Graduation Ceremony - March 2010, Plymouth, WI:** A correctional institution was including religious music in its graduation ceremonies for prisoners earning vocational certificates and high-school equivalency degrees. AU wrote to the warden to explain that the inclusion of religious music at a prison graduation ceremony posed serious constitutional concerns because of the importance of the event to prisoners seeking to enrich their lives through education and because of the risk of coercion inherent in the prison setting. We received a response from the warden, who said he had reviewed the practice and that he planned to immediately discontinue the use of religious music at the graduation ceremonies.

**AU Cautions VA Medical Center to Avoid Promoting Religious Events - February 2010, St. Louis, MO:** AU received a complaint regarding a proselytizing holiday performance at a VA Medical Center in St. Louis, where it appeared that VA patients were taken to the performance by Center staff without being told of the program's religious nature. We wrote a letter expressing our discomfort with the government's support of such programming. The hospital's administration responded, agreeing that there had been a failure of communication about the nature of the event. The administration assured us that it would endeavor to make clear to patients which events are religious and to inform patients that attendance at religious events is purely optional.

**AU Stops Officer from Displaying Cross on Police Cruiser - January 2010, St. Augustine, FL:** AU learned that a St. John's County Sheriff's Department employee had placed a cross in the back window of his police cruiser. We wrote to the Department to explain that it is unconstitutional for a government official to display a religious symbol, and to ask that it be removed. We received a response from the Sheriff assuring us that the cross had been removed from the window.

**AU Puts an End to Prayer at School Events - January 2010, Madisonville, KY:** AU received a complaint about prayers occurring at Hopkins County School District events, including Board of Education meetings and annual district-wide in-service events. We wrote to the district superintendent to explain that prayer at public-school events is unconstitutional. The school district's attorney wrote back to inform us that both practices would be stopped.

**AU Cuts Religion from Citizenship Ceremonies - January 2010, Sullivan's Island, SC:** The National Park Service holds an annual Constitution Day event that doubles as a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens. In 2009, the ceremony featured religious content,

including a prayer and gospel songs. AU wrote park officials to explain that the inclusion of prayer and other religious content in official government events is unconstitutional. Park officials responded and agreed that they would discontinue the practice of including religious messages and performances in the festivities.

## 2009

**Americans United and Allies Achieve Removal of Religious Courthouse Displays - December 2009, Wilkes-Barre, PA:** AU learned that a crèche and menorah were displayed on the lawn of the Luzerne County Courthouse. AU and the ACLU of Pennsylvania wrote a joint letter to county officials explaining that the government may not display religious symbols unless they are a part of a larger display that communicates a secular holiday message. In response, both displays were promptly removed.

**AU Ends Government's Religious Holiday Display - December 2009, Saukville, WI:** AU received a complaint about the Village of Saukville's display of a crèche on government property. We wrote a letter to the village explaining that it is unconstitutional for the government to display a religious symbol on public property when the religious symbol stands alone or is predominant. We received a response that the village had removed the crèche within six days of receipt of our letter.

**AU Ensures Township's Holiday Display Avoids Promoting Religion - December 2009, Montville, NJ:** The Township of Montville erected a holiday display on the lawn of the Montville Municipal Building. The display prominently featured a crèche and a menorah near the front of the Municipal Building. AU wrote a letter to the town and explained that it is unconstitutional for the government to display religious items unless they are integrated into a larger secular display. The township responded to our letter by erecting several secular holiday decorations, including a snowman and a nutcracker.

**AU Protects Naturalized Citizen from Being Required to Take a Religious Oath - November 2009, Washington, DC:** AU received a complaint from a man seeking a modified Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens because he objected to swearing "so help me God." Despite several written requests to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), when he appeared at his swearing-in ceremony, he was not given the option of an alternative oath and was removed from the ceremony. He then met with two USCIS officials, who hinted that his application would be reviewed again and potentially denied as a result of his refusal to take the standard oath. AU wrote a letter to USCIS officials reminding them that federal regulations require that persons who object to the religious nature of the Oath of Allegiance be allowed to affirm an alternative oath without a religious component. USCIS did not respond to the first letter or schedule a new ceremony, so AU followed up with a second letter in January 2010. Two days after the second letter was sent, our complainant was contacted by USCIS and offered a new swearing-in ceremony with the modified oath.

**Americans United Stops Christian Ministry from Operating Prisons - November 2009, Oklahoma City, OK:** AU learned that a Christian prison ministry was pursuing plans to open a privately-owned prison in Oklahoma. The ministry then planned to seek a contract with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections to house inmates at this facility,

which would require inmates to participate in religious activities. We sent a letter to the Department of Corrections noting that any such contract would likely violate the separation of church and state. The Department's Director contacted us and assured us that he understood our concerns and that the Department had no intention of entering into any contracts with the prison ministry. In early 2010, AU learned that the prison ministry had contacted prison officials in several other states. AU sent follow-up letters to officials in each of those states. We have received a response from prison officials in Kansas assuring us that they will not be entering into a contract with the prison ministry.

**Thanks to AU, Superintendent No Longer Leads Religious See You at the Pole Events - November 2009, Hanover, PA:** AU received a complaint that a school superintendent in Pennsylvania participated in a See You at the Pole event in his professional capacity — delivering opening remarks and praying with the assembled students. We wrote to the district, explaining that school officials may be present at such events to monitor students behavior, but that they may not participate in religious activity. We received a response from the district's attorney, explaining that the superintendent was new at the job and unaware of the constitutional restrictions — and that the attorney had now advised him of the constitutional requirements for such events.

**AU Spurs Removal of Bible Quotations from Official Government E-mails - November 2009, Phoenix, AZ:** An employee of the Phoenix V.A. Health Care System was including four proselytizing quotations from the Bible in her official e-mail messages. AU wrote to her supervisor and explained that the inclusion of religious messages in official government communications violates the separation of church and state. We received no official response, but our complainant informed us that the religious quotations have been removed.

**Americans United Stops City Practice of Opening Events with Official Prayer - October 2009, Castle Pines North, CO:** AU wrote to the City of Castle Pines North about its practice of including official prayer at City-sponsored events, including an annual Fourth of July event. Our initial letter met with a negative response, but AU persisted, writing again in 2010 to oppose the practice. In September 2012, we learned that the City had ceased including prayers at its events.

**AU Prompts Sheriff's Department to Discontinue Day of Prayer Participation - October 2009, Syracuse, NY:** Officials from the Onandoga County Sheriff's Department were participating in National Day of Prayer events. AU wrote to the Sheriff's Department to inform them that it is unconstitutional for government officials to participate in religious events while on duty. We learned that no Sheriff's Department officials participated in the 2010 National Day of Prayer event, and a County Attorney assured us that the County understood our position and would discuss the matter with Sheriff's Department officials.

**AU Ensures Secular Setting for High School Graduation - October 2009, Canton, GA:** AU received a complaint that a public high school was holding its graduation in a local church. We wrote to the school district to explain that the Establishment Clause prohibits the holding of public-school graduation ceremonies in churches. The school district responded and agreed to seek a secular venue for its graduations in upcoming years.

**AU Stops School Promotion of Prayer Event - October 2009, Humble, TX:** AU learned that the superintendent of a Texas school district participated in a National Day of Prayer breakfast in his official capacity, and that he had invited a choir and color guard from two of the schools in his district to participate in the same event. We wrote to the district and explained that both the participation of the superintendent in his official capacity and the coercion of students to participate in a religious event violate the Constitution. We received a response from the district's attorney, who promised that the superintendent would only take part in future National Day of Prayer events as a private citizen and that district officials would not invite students to attend or participate.

**School Principal Retracts Endorsement of Religious Program, Thanks to AU - September 2009, High Point, NC:** The principal of a North Carolina elementary school sent out a letter to parents advertising a Bible-based tutoring program and encouraging parents to enroll their students in that program. AU wrote to the school district and explained that it is unconstitutional for a school official to endorse a religious program. The district's attorney acknowledged the violation and informed us that the district had educated the principal on his responsibilities, that the letter would be discontinued, and that the principal would be required to send a retraction to all the parents who had received the original letter.

**AU Prompts City to Discontinue Sponsorship of Religious Performance - September 2009, Holladay, UT:** AU received a complaint that, beginning in 2007, the city of Holladay had been providing funds and preferential access to government facilities for a performance of Handel's "Messiah" during the Christmas season. In 2007 the city paid for a banner to advertise the production and for custodial personnel to staff the event. In 2008 the city provided an insurance certificate and funding for the stage crew. In both years, the production was allowed to use the auditorium of a local high-school for free, while other private groups were required to pay a fee to use the same space. We wrote to the mayor and city council explaining that government support of religious performances is unconstitutional and asking that the city stop funding the event and that the school district stop providing special access to its facilities. By early October, various news outlets reported that this year's performance would be held at a local church and not at the high school. We also received a letter from the city assuring us that no public funds would be budgeted for the performance.

**AU Puts an End to State's Faith-Based Abstinence Training - September 2009, Jackson, MS:** The Mississippi Department of Human Services hosts an annual teen-abstinence summit called Abstinence Works — Let's Talk About It! Over five thousand teenagers attended this year's event, which began with an opening prayer and included a featured speaker who prominently quoted the Bible and explained that God ordered humanity to be abstinent. AU wrote to the Department of Human Services and explained that religious proselytizing at a state-sponsored event violates the separation of church and state. We received a response from the Department agreeing to forego religious presentations at future state-run events.

**AU Stops National Park's Worship Services - August 2009, Death Valley, CA:** AU learned that the visitor's center in Death Valley National Park was allowing a park ranger to host a Christian worship service on park property that was not open for use by private parties. We wrote to the park superintendent to explain that governmental involvement in

the presentation of a religious worship service is unconstitutional, and to ask that the worship service be discontinued or that the park allow private groups equal access to the park facility for secular activities. The park superintendent responded and informed us that the worship service had been discontinued.

**AU Ensures Government-Funded Preschool Isn't Teaching Religion - July 2009, Hot Springs, AR:** A local Head Start program, which received funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, required students to pray before meals, allowed employees to communicate religious messages to students, and featured prayer at the program's graduation ceremony. AU wrote to program officials to explain that government funds may not be used to support programs that incorporate prayer or other religious activities or require participation in religious activity. Health and Human Services officials investigated the program. They informed us that the Head Start Regional Office and the management company of the local program had performed retraining of the program's staff in September 2009, and had conducted a monitoring follow-up in November 2009. These officials have assured AU that religious activity is no longer occurring in the local Head Start program.

**AU Cuts Proselytization from School Assembly - July 2009, Sharon Springs, KS:** AU received a complaint about a proposed event at a local high school that was to be led by the Todd Becker Foundation and was to involve both religious proselytizing and distribution of religious materials. We wrote to the school district and informed them that the event was improper under the First Amendment. The district chose to go forward with the assembly, but took concrete steps to ensure that no religious content or proselytizing was included in the event.

**AU Prompts School to Remove Prayer from its Events - July 2009, Luling, LA:** AU received a complaint that a high school in the St. Charles Parish Public School District held a mandatory faculty lunch which opened with a prayer delivered by a minister. We wrote to the district to explain that the inclusion of prayer at official school events is unconstitutional. The district responded that it would ensure that prayer would not be included in future school-sponsored activities.

**AU Persuades City Council to Discontinue Sectarian Prayers - July 2009, Hopkinsville, KY:** AU learned that the Hopkinsville City Council frequently began its meetings with sectarian Christian prayer. We wrote to the Council and explained that it is unconstitutional for a legislative body to begin meetings with sectarian prayer — only non-sectarian prayer is allowed. The Council's attorney responded that he had advised the Council to have only non-sectarian prayer, and our complainant has attended several meetings since and confirmed that the Council has switched to non-sectarian prayers.

**AU Stops Religious Club's Solicitation at School Lunches - July 2009, San Jose, CA:** AU received a complaint about a "Campus Life" religious club at Willow Glen Middle School that was being run at lunch-time by non-school personnel. These non-school persons were approaching students, distributing candy and stickers, and soliciting student participation in the club. We wrote to the school district, explaining that this behavior raised constitutional red flags and asking the district to investigate. They responded that it was against school policy for an outsider to run a student club and that they had been unaware that this was going on. They agreed to stop non-school personnel from running



the Campus Life club and to ensure that there will be no further solicitation of non-participating students to join the religious club.

**AU Advises Against Prayers at High School Graduation - June 2009, Exeter, PA:**

AU received a complaint that students at the Wyoming Area Secondary Center — a public high-school — were slated to deliver prayers at the school's graduation ceremony and that the school district had played a role in organizing, promoting, and encouraging students to attend a baccalaureate ceremony. We wrote a letter to school district officials explaining that the presentation of prayers at public-school graduations, and the school's sponsorship of baccalaureate ceremonies, are unconstitutional. The district's superintendent responded and assured us that there was no prayer at the graduation ceremony, that the school did not sponsor the baccalaureate ceremony, and that the district would review their practices with their attorney to ensure compliance with the Constitution. Our complainant subsequently confirmed the school did not include any prayers in the graduation ceremony.

**AU Stops Proselytization During Public School Classes - June 2009, Dallas, GA:**

AU learned that a weightlifting teacher at a Paulding County public high school was allowing a youth minister to visit the class and proselytize students while they were lifting weights. The district's superintendent responded by promising to investigate AU's concerns and to put a stop to any violations. Our complainant confirmed that the youth minister no longer visits the weightlifting class.

**AU Protects Homeless from Being Forced to Attend Religious Services- June 2009, Klamath Falls, OR:**

AU received a complaint that the Klamath Falls Union Gospel Mission — a homeless shelter that receives government funding — required shelter residents to attend daily devotional services in order to receive shelter benefits. We wrote to officials at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), the agency that administered the grant, and explained that homeless shelters may not require religious activities as a condition of services funded by government money. OHCS responded to our letter by reminding the shelter of constitutional restrictions on the use of government funds and by initiating an investigation to ensure that the shelter does not require religious activities of shelter residents.

**Board of Education Discontinues Prayers, Thanks to AU - June 2009, Boone**

**County, KY:** The Boone County Board of Education hosts an annual awards ceremony for students. AU received a complaint that this event began with a prayer delivered by a Board member and that some members of the Board, when confronted by a parent about the prayer, responded in a hostile fashion. We wrote to the Board explaining that the prayer was unconstitutional and chastising the Board for its hostile response to a legitimate constitutional concern. A member of the Board who supports the separation of church and state contacted us and assured us that the matter would be dealt with. Subsequently, we received word that the awards-ceremony prayer would be changed to a moment of silence at future events.

**AU Prompts Removal of Cross from Community Center - June 2009, Camp Verde,**

**AZ:** AU learned that the Camp Verde Parks and Recreation Department allowed a cross to be displayed on the wall at a city-owned community-center basketball court. AU wrote to explain that the display of a lone cross on city property is unconstitutional and to request the removal of the cross. Camp Verde's Town Manager agreed that the display was

unconstitutional and removed the cross from the wall. The cross is owned by a religious group that rents out space in the community center once a week. Camp Verde now allows the group's members to display the cross on the wall when they are renting the space as long as they remove it when they are finished.

**AU Halts Teaching of Biblical Stories as Historical Truth in Public Middle School - June 2009, Raytown, MO:** AU received a complaint that a Social Studies teacher at Raytown Middle School told a student that the events of the Bible were historical truth and that the school's social studies textbook, World History, Journey Across Time: The Early Ages, contained inappropriate religious material. We wrote to the school district to inform them that it is unconstitutional for public-school teachers to present the Bible to public-school students as religious truth. We also cautioned the school district that Journey Across Time possesses a troubling tendency to present Biblical stories alongside historical facts, and that teachers who used the book risk violating the Constitution by presenting Biblical stories as fact, precisely as did the teacher at Raytown Middle. The district contacted us to say that they took our complaint seriously and would speak to the teacher about her comments and about the proper use of the textbook.

**AU Knocks Church Out of the Running in Referendum Selecting Venue for Public High School Graduation - May 2009, Rockville, MD:** Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) policy requires high schools to hold graduations at secular venues. AU learned that students at Montgomery Blair High School had received a survey asking them to rank five potential graduation venues, one of which was a large church. The survey emphasized the amenities of the church and made it appear more desirable than the four secular options. AU wrote to the school district to explain that holding public-school graduations in a church is unconstitutional, and to support MCPS's current policy. We further cautioned that a school-sponsored referendum on whether to hold graduation in a church is an independent constitutional violation. The district responded and informed us that the survey had been created by the school's parent-teacher organization rather than by school officials. The Superintendent assured us that the district and the school would abide by the current policy and, as we requested, would formulate a plan to inform parents and students who had received the survey that MCPS high schools would not consider the church as a graduation option. AU has previously addressed similar issues with MCPS in 2005 and 2007.

**No Prayer at Public High School Graduation Thanks to Americans United - May 2009, Chillicothe, OH:** Southeastern High School had a practice of including a prayer at its graduation ceremony. AU wrote a letter to the school explaining that school-sponsored prayer at graduation is unconstitutional. Shortly after receipt of our letter, the school discontinued its prayer practice.

**AU Stops Religious Coercion of the Poor at State-Funded Homeless Shelter - April 2009, La Crosse, WI:** For several years, La Crosse County has contracted with the Salvation Army to provide shelter services to the homeless and the mentally ill. AU received complaints that, at its shelter facility, the Salvation Army regularly held religious services and presented prayers and sermons at meals. We sent a letter to the county explaining that the Constitution prohibits public funds from being used to support any program that includes religious activity, much less one that requires participants to partake of that activity. We asked the county to investigate the program's religious activity

and to ensure that its funding of the program did not violate those prohibitions. The county informed us that it had met with the Salvation Army and had made it clear that the shelter services provided by the county were not to be used to support religious activity. The county also will monitor its contract with the Salvation Army by visiting the shelter facility twice per year (once unannounced) and by conducting confidential interviews at least four times per year with persons who are being provided shelter services to determine whether they are being pressured or coerced to attend or participate in religious activities.

**County Clerk Removes Preachy Poems Thanks to Americans United - April 2009, Oak Ridge, TN:** AU received a complaint that an employee of the Anderson County Clerk's Office hung two religious poems in her work area. The poems were positioned so that any client transacting business was certain to see them. We wrote a letter to the County Clerk, explaining that religious displays in a government office posed serious constitutional concerns, and asking that the poems be removed. Shortly thereafter, the religious displays were taken down.

**Bibles No Longer Distributed Alongside Diplomas at High School Graduation after AU Cautions School Officials - March 2009, Big Timber, MT:** Sweet Grass County High School had a tradition of allowing a local ministerial association to distribute Bibles to students at the school's graduation ceremony. Graduates would receive their diplomas on stage and then were immediately offered a Bible by representatives of the association. AU was informed that, in response to a student's complaint, the school's Board of Trustees would be considering whether or not to change the policy. We wrote to the Board to explain that the distribution was unconstitutional and should be discontinued. At its next meeting, the Board terminated the practice.

**Americans United Stops Prayer at Mandatory High School Assemblies - March 2009, Andrews, SC:** AU received a complaint that a student at Andrews High School had led attendees at a mandatory assembly for Black History Month in a prayer. We wrote a letter to the district explaining that prayer at public-school programs and events is unconstitutional and asking the district to take corrective action. The district responded, explaining that it recognized that the prayer was impermissible and assuring us that it would not happen again.

**AU Prompts Science Teacher at Public School to Drop Creationist Material from School-Linked Website - March 2009, Advance, NC:** AU received a complaint that a science teacher at William Ellis Middle School maintained a website that endorsed "creation science." The school's official website linked directly to the teacher's site, which also contained updated homework assignments, supply lists, and frequently asked questions — indicating that the content of the website was approved by the school. We wrote to the school district to explain that the teaching of religious theories on the origins of human life is unconstitutional and to ask that the district take steps to ensure that the teacher was not promoting creationism through her school website or in her classroom. The teacher removed the creationism page from her website the day after we sent our letter. The school then responded, stating that the violation had been discontinued.

**Public High School Students Taught Math Minus the Unconstitutional Proselytization Thanks to AU - March 2009, Frankfort, OH:** A math teacher at Adena High School displayed proselytizing Christian pamphlets beside the pencil sharpener in his

classroom, played Christian worship songs during class, and used a copy of the Bible as a hall-pass. In response to a complaint about this behavior, AU sent a letter to the school district, explaining that it is unconstitutional for teachers to proselytize to students, to distribute religious materials to students, or to erect religious displays in public-school classrooms. The school then removed the religious pamphlets and Bible, and stopped the playing of the religious music.

**No High School Graduation in Evangelical Church After Letter from Americans United - February 2009, New Berlin, WI:** AU received a complaint that New Berlin Eisenhower High School had held its 2008 graduation ceremony in an evangelical Christian church and that it planned to use the same venue for its 2009 graduation. The church is replete with religious iconography, including a large cross that hangs directly over the stage where graduates would have received their diplomas. We wrote to the school district to explain that holding a high-school graduation in a church is unconstitutional and to request that the district move the graduation to a secular venue. The district responded to our complaint by agreeing to move the 2009 graduation to a secular venue and to refrain in the future from using the church as a graduation venue.

**AU Drives Religious Content Out of Department of Transportation Official's Email Signature - January 2009, Gainesville, GA:** AU received a complaint that an employee of the Georgia Department of Transportation was including in all of his official e-mails an image of a cross and a lengthy proselytizing message. We wrote to the Georgia Department of Transportation and explained that the inclusion of religious messages in official government e-mail raised serious constitutional concerns. An attorney for the Department responded and informed us that it had instructed the employee to remove the messages from his official e-mails and that he had complied.

**Americans United Puts a Stop to Mandatory Assemblies Featuring Religious Content for Charter School Faculty - January 2009, Washington, DC:** Nia Community Public Charter School (NCPCS) held a school-sponsored African Naming Ceremony at its campus in Washington, D.C. School staff were required to attend. The ceremony was presided over by a priest, who said prayers and made spiritual offerings. In response to a complaint, AU wrote a letter to the school's board of trustees, explaining that school-sponsored religious ceremonies are unconstitutional and that school employees could not be required to attend religious ceremonies. We received a response from the Chairperson of NCPCS's board of trustees, stating that they would not feature prayers or religious content at future ceremonies, that employees would not be required to attend, and that NCPCS had circulated a memo to all staff reminding all personnel to comply with the requirements of the Establishment Clause.

## 2008

**Americans United Convinces City to Remove Sectarian Christmas Display from City Hall - December 2008, Avon Lake, OH:** The city of Avon Lake placed a message on a sign in front of its City Hall stating, "Remember Christ is in Christmas." AU wrote a letter objecting to the message. Within a few days, the city removed the message from the sign.

**AU Successfully Fields Complaint About Agriculture Department Official's Religious Email Signature - December 2008, Temple, TX:** An employee of the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Office's human resources department was including a religious message in the signature line of all the official e-mails that she sent during the course of her work. The message read: "The evidence of God's presence far outweighs the proof of his absence." AU wrote to USDA Rural Development and objected to the use of official e-mail to communicate a proselytizing message. We received a response two weeks later, informing us that the religious message had been removed from the employee's signature line and that the Rural Development Office had circulated an internal memorandum reminding employees that official government e-mail should not be used to communicate religious messages or for other personal purposes.

**Americans United Stops School from Taking Kids for a Ride at Pseudo-Science Theme Park - November 2008, Climax Springs, MO:** AU learned that Climax Springs Elementary School had taken its students on a field trip to the Orion Center and its DinoSpace Adventure theme park. Both the Orion Center and DinoSpace Adventure teach creationism in the guise of science, and AU informed the school district that the teaching of creationism or intelligent design to public-school students is unconstitutional. We have been informed by the district superintendent that he will not approve any further field trips to the Orion Center or DinoSpace Adventure.

**State Administrative Agency Removes Religious Signs and Bibles from Lobby After Letter from Americans United - November 2008, Fort Smith, AR:** AU received a complaint that employees in the lobby of the Fort Smith Department of Human Services Office had placed home-made signs with Bible verses in plain view of the public, and that Bibles and other religious items were prominently displayed at the office where the public could see them. AU objected to these policies in a November 2008 letter and requested removal of the displays. We were contacted in December 2008 by the Department of Human Services' attorney, who informed us that the agency had removed the Bibles and the religious signs.

**AU Tackles Coach-Led Prayers involving Public High School Football Team - October 2008, Pittsburgh, PA:** The head football coach at Keystone Oaks High School led prayers with his team before and after practices, and when the team ate meals together. We sent a letter to the school district, complaining about this practice. Although we did not receive a direct response from the district, our complainant's son, who is on the football team, confirmed that by the end of the season, the prayers had been replaced with a moment of silent meditation.

**No Teacher Tenure for Persistent Preacher After Sustained Effort by AU - September 2008, Hickory, NC:** AU received a complaint from a student at Challenger Early College High School that an English teacher at the school was proselytizing students and posting religious displays in his classroom. AU wrote the school district objecting to both practices and our complainant reported that the displays were removed and that the teacher's religious rhetoric had been toned down. However, less than a month later we were informed that religious content had begun to recur in the class. We wrote a follow-up letter informing the school and requesting that they monitor the teacher's compliance with constitutional requirements. Finally, in June 2009 we were directed to an audio recording of a lecture, given by the same teacher, attacking evolution — calling it a "fairy-tale" and

suggesting that teachers who presented it were lying to students — and advancing an explicitly creationist world view. AU wrote a third letter to the school district, pointing out the recording and informing the district that it could be held responsible for the teacher's repeated unconstitutional actions. We received a response from the school district that it had begun an investigation into the teacher's conduct, and we subsequently learned that the district had declined to offer the teacher tenure and that he had resigned as a result.

**Moment of Silence Replaces Prayer at Meetings After AU Writes School Board - September 2008, Huntsville, AL:** The Huntsville City School Board opened its meetings with a prayer from a board member or school-district employee. The Huntsville City Schools also held an annual, mandatory in-service meeting for district employees, inviting clergy to open the meeting with a sectarian prayer. AU wrote to the school district, objecting to both practices and requesting that the district discontinue the prayers. Our complainant informs us that the prayers at school-board meetings have been replaced by a moment of contemplation, and that a similar policy will be put into effect for the annual in-service meeting. AU will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the in-service meeting does not open with a prayer in 2009.

**Proselytizing Coach Strikes Out at Public University After AU Pitches a Fit - August 2008, Martin, TN:** AU received a complaint that the University of Tennessee at Martin's baseball coach held mandatory prayers with his players before and after games and at practices. The coach also held "team meetings" on Sunday mornings during road trips; these meetings often featured proselytizing speakers. AU wrote to the University in August 2008 to explain that a public-university employee may not constitutionally endorse religion or coerce religious practices by student athletes. AU's attorneys discussed the matter with the University's counsel and sent a follow-up letter. The University's Chancellor instructed the coach in November to discontinue his prayer practices and to refrain from coercing students to pray or from suggesting that they do so.

**Americans United Helps New American Take Citizenship Oath Free from Religious Coercion - August 2008, Miami, FL:** AU received a complaint from a man seeking a modified Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens because he objected to swearing "so help me God" or "on oath." A U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officer initially told our complainant that CIS would allow a modified oath, but a different officer later told him that it was uncertain whether a modified oath would be allowed and that our complainant would need to fill out a long supplemental questionnaire. AU wrote CIS a letter in August 2008 explaining that federal regulations require that persons who object to the religious nature of the Oath of Allegiance be allowed to affirm an alternative oath without a religious component. Our complainant confirmed in October that he was allowed to take the modified oath and is now a U.S. citizen.

**AU Stops Facility-Rental Favoritism for Religious Group at Public School - July 2008, Three Lakes, WI:** Three Lakes Elementary School allowed the YMCA to use its facilities to run a program (the Children's Learning Center) free of charge, but required other, secular organizations to pay a fee for the use of the same facilities. In July 2008, AU sent a letter to the school superintendent challenging the arrangement as unconstitutional. We received no response, but we contacted the superintendent again in July 2009 and were informed that the school now provides free use of its facilities to all organizations that provide a service to the community.

**State Supreme Court Covers Religious Iconography at Oral Arguments Held in Religious Venues in Response to Letters from AU - July 2008, Providence, RI:** AU learned that the Rhode Island Supreme Court sometimes holds oral argument in religious venues across the state, and that, in the past, the court has made no effort to cover visible religious iconography. AU wrote to the court in July 2008, objecting to the court's holding a session at a private Catholic high school in Newport — a venue featuring numerous uncovered religious items, such as crucifixes and images of saints. We received no response to this letter. We sent a second letter after the court held a session at Salve Regina University, yet another venue featuring prominent uncovered religious items, in November 2008. In December, AU received a response from the court's general counsel, assuring us that the court sits in secular venues as well as religious venues and that the court now has a policy of covering or removing religious symbols when holding arguments in religious venues.

**AU Convinces State School Board Association to Modify Model Policy Permitting Election of Graduation Prayer - July 2008, Austin, TX:** The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) publishes model policies for its member school boards. These model policies are typically incorporated in the policy manuals of individual school boards. TASB's model policy on graduation prayer stated that students could select student volunteers to deliver nonsectarian, nonproselytizing invocations. AU wrote to TASB and suggested that TASB change its model policy in light of a recent Texas federal district court ruling, in a case litigated by AU, that student elections on graduation prayer are unconstitutional. TASB informed us that they have updated their model policy to state that school districts should not adopt policies that establish improper majoritarian elections on prayer at graduation. TASB also informed its member school boards about the recent Texas federal district court ruling.

**Americans United Stops Federal Grant to Fundamentalist Christian Addiction Counseling Organization - June 2008, Louisville, KY:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded a \$50,000 Compassion Capital Fund grant to Teen Challenge of Kentucky, a fundamentalist Christian group that claims to treat drug and alcohol addiction through mandatory prayer, worship, Bible study, and other religious activities. AU wrote a letter to HHS objecting to public funding of this proselytizing organization. In response, HHS informed AU that Teen Challenge had "voluntarily terminated" its Compassion Capital Fund grant. Teen Challenge had received only a small portion of the grant before it was terminated.

**High School Graduations Moved to Secular Venue After Letter from AU - June 2008, Fairless Hills, PA:** For the third consecutive year, officials at Bucks County Technical High School scheduled the school's graduation ceremony to take place in the sanctuary of a local Christian church, where graduating students are seated directly below an enormous cross. In a letter to the school, AU objected to the practice, and requested that the ceremony be relocated, or that, at a minimum, religious iconography be covered. School officials responded favorably, agreeing to find a secular location for future graduations, and taking steps to make religious iconography less visible during this year's commencement ceremony, which could not be relocated on such short notice. In 2009 AU learned that school officials voted to move the graduation ceremonies to a commercial arena.

**AU Helps Jehovah's Witness Become Naturalized Citizen Without Taking Religiously Objectionable Citizenship Oath - May 2008, Garden City, NY:** AU received a complaint from a woman seeking a modified Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens because she had religious objections to pledging to bear arms on behalf of the United States, to using the term "oath," and to swearing "so help me God." The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services required her to provide a letter from a religious organization certifying membership in good standing in order to qualify for an alternative oath. Our complainant could not obtain that certification because, although she is a practicing Jehovah's Witness, her church requires baptism for membership, and she had not yet reached the stage in her religious training for baptism to be appropriate. AU wrote CIS a letter in May 2008 explaining that federal regulations require the administration of an alternative oath to religious objectors upon request, regardless of whether the objector is formally a member of any religious group. CIS sent our complainant an invitation to a citizenship swearing-in ceremony without saying whether she would be allowed to take a modified oath, so we sent a follow-up letter in July. In August 2008 CIS confirmed that it was allowing the modified Oath of Allegiance, and our complainant is now a U.S. Citizen.

**Americans United Stops Bible Distribution at Public Elementary School - April 2008, Yellville, AR:** In 2008, AU learned that the Yellville Summit School District had allowed Gideons to enter school grounds to distribute Bibles to fifth-grade students. We wrote to the district and explained that allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles directly to students violates the Constitution. We thought that our letter had settled the matter. However, the next year we received word that the district had allowed the Bible distribution to happen again. We wrote a follow-up letter in July 2009 and this time we received a response from the Superintendent, who informed us that he had directed the middle-school principal not to allow the Gideons to distribute Bibles in district schools in the future.

**School District Ceases Discrimination Against Wiccan Student after Warning from AU - April 2008, Greeneville, TN:** The Greene County Schools maintain a policy of allowing students to be excused from school on religious holidays regularly observed by the students' faiths. Despite this policy, the Schools refused to excuse a Wiccan student from school to observe two Wiccan religious holidays. In a letter to the Schools, we explained that the Schools' failure to apply the policy to Wiccans constituted invidious discrimination against Wiccans that violated the Establishment, Free Exercise, and Equal Protection Clauses of the Constitution. The same day we sent the letter, the Schools agreed to allow the student to take the Wiccan holiday of Beltane off. We have asked the Schools to ensure that Wiccans are treated equally with respect to future holidays, and we are awaiting a response.

**Americans United Gets City to End Unconstitutional Favoritism for Churches in Charging for Utilities - April 2008, Mt. Airy, MD:** AU received a complaint regarding Mt. Airy's long-standing policy of providing free water and sewer services to local churches. In a letter to the Town Council, AU explained that the arrangement favoring religious organizations was unconstitutional and urged officials to either extend this benefit to other non-profit organizations or terminate the benefit altogether. Mt. Airy's Mayor responded via letter, informing AU that the Town had changed its policy to provide free services to all non-profits through this summer, after which the Town plans to phase out the benefit entirely.



**County Board of Elections Stops Enforcing Religious Dietary Restrictions Against Poll Workers Stationed at Jewish Day School Polling Place in Response to Letter from AU - March 2008, Rockville, MD:** AU was contacted by an election judge who complained that the Montgomery County Board of Elections had enforced Jewish dietary restrictions on poll workers who staffed a polling place located in a Jewish day school. Election judges, who are required to stay at the polling place for the entire day, were not permitted to eat meat or fowl in deference to Jewish religious tenets. When one election judge complained to the Board of Elections, the Election Director offered only to allow the judge to transfer to a different polling place. We wrote a letter explaining that the Board had unconstitutionally entangled itself with religion by enforcing religious laws at its polling place. We asked the Board to stop enforcing religious restrictions and to reconsider the practice of designating religious facilities as polling places. In March 2010, the Board's attorney informed us that the Board had voted to no longer use the day school as a polling place.

**AU Torpedoes Proselytization by English Sub - March 2008, Tuscaloosa, AL:** AU received a complaint that a substitute teacher at Tuscaloosa City Schools posted a Bible verse and made proselytizing comments while filling in for an English teacher at a city high school. We wrote a letter to the Schools informing them that it is unconstitutional for school employees to present religious messages to students in class. The school principal subsequently spoke to the teacher about her actions and monitored her conduct. Since then, the teacher has not engaged in similar conduct. We will continue to monitor the teacher's activities.

**Americans United Stops Plan to Erect Cross on Courthouse Lawn - March 2008, Keyser, WV:** AU received a complaint that the Mineral County Commission granted permission to a local church to place a seven-foot cross on the lawn of the Mineral County Courthouse from March 17 to March 24 in order to commemorate the Easter holiday. In a letter objecting to the plan, AU explained that the display would send the unequivocal message that one religion, Christianity, enjoys favored status with the government of Mineral County. The cross was not erected.

**AU Convinces School to Cancel Assembly Featuring Group Known For Proselytizing To Students - February 2008, Laredo, TX:** AU was contacted regarding a middle-school assembly scheduled to take place in early March. The assembly was to feature Commandos! USA, a group that performs regularly at Evangelical Christian events and has previously engaged in religious proselytizing at other public-school assemblies. In a letter to the middle school, AU asked that the school either cancel the assembly or ensure that the assembly would not include religious content. The school district's attorney informed AU two days later that the school had cancelled the assembly.

**Public High School Stops Screening Religious Film After Warning from Americans United - January 2008, Tuscaloosa, AL:** AU received a complaint that teachers at a Tuscaloosa high school showed the film Facing the Giants to their classes. Facing the Giants is an evangelical sports film, produced by a Baptist church and designed to convert viewers to Christianity. AU wrote a letter to Tuscaloosa City Schools objecting to the screening of the film and explaining that public-school teachers cannot present religious messages to their students. Tuscaloosa City Schools did not directly respond to the letter,

but our complainant confirmed that there have been no further screenings of Facing the Giants.

**Letter from AU Prompts School District to Take the Classroom Out of Religion - January 2008, Bellevue, WA:** After receiving complaints from parents, AU sent a letter in October 2007 objecting to a Washington-state school district's housing of an alternative school in a local Evangelical Christian church. The church was rife with religious iconography. We demanded that the iconography be covered and that the school be moved to a District facility for the 2008-09 school year. The District responded by denying that students were exposed to any religious iconography and claimed that the location was temporary while a new school was being built. After gathering additional evidence of the religious iconography, AU sent a second letter to the District in January. The letter detailed the numerous ways in which the children were exposed to religious materials and again demanded that the District take action. The letter also included a public-records request. Documents we received in response to the request indicated that the District was well aware of the Establishment Clause problems when it leased the space: Officials had originally included strict language in the lease regarding religious iconography, but the provisions were virtually eliminated because of the church's objections. The District has since informed AU that the alternative school will be moved to an existing District facility for the start of the 2008-09 school year.

**School District Extricates Itself From Foundation Funding Religious Events After AU Investigates - January 2008, Kimberly, WI:** In 2007, AU wrote a letter objecting to the Kimberly Area School District's sponsorship of a religious modesty fashion show for elementary-school girls. After receiving AU's letter, the District's counsel informed AU that the District would revoke approval for the event to take place at a District school, remove all advertising for the event from District schools, and send a note to parents and students disclaiming any association with the event. The District, however, did not revoke \$500 in funding for the show that had been awarded by the District's Positive Youth Development Foundation, which provides grants to support various after-school activities. Though District officials claimed that the Foundation was a private entity that distributed funds raised from private sources, the Foundation operated out of the District's main administration building, was run by District officials, and used District resources in vetting grant applicants and awarding funds to recipients, including a number of religious organizations that used the monies to support religious events and activities. Explaining that the Foundation and its grants to religious entities were at best in symbiosis with the District, and at worst a District operation through and through, AU sent the District a public-records request in January 2008 in order to investigate the improper arrangement. In May, District officials announced that the Foundation would no longer operate out of the administration building and that the Foundation would revise its bylaws to "comply with the concerns of separation of church and state."

**AU Gets Sheriff to Pull Jesus from the Back of a Patrol Car - January 2008, Greensboro, NC:** AU received a complaint that a Guilford County deputy had placed a sign bearing the message "Jesus is our savior" on the back of the front passenger seat of his patrol car. In a letter to the County sheriff's office, AU explained that government employees may not, in the performance of their duties, proselytize or communicate religious messages to members of the public verbally or by displaying religious symbols that are

visible to the public. In response to our letter, the County sheriff informed AU that the offending sign had been removed.

## 2007

**Parole Board Allows Secular Alternatives to Religious Addiction Counseling After Letter from AU - December 2007, Erie, PA:** AU received a complaint that the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole required a parolee, as a condition of parole, to attend Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. The Board required attendance at the AA and NA meetings, which contain religious content, despite a request for a secular alternative. In a letter to the Board, AU advised officials that coercing criminal offenders — either overtly by threat of punishment or subtly by providing incentives — to participate in a religious rehabilitation program violates the Establishment Clause. AU asked that the Board provide parolees with a secular alternative to AA and NA meetings, and that the Board allow parolees to opt out of all religious programming without suffering negative consequences. After receiving AU's letter, the Board rescinded the requirement that the parolee attend AA and NA meetings, and allowed the parolee to seek treatment at an alternative venue.

**AU Stops Typing Teacher Playing Preacher - December 2007, Kennesaw, GA:** AU received a complaint that a keyboarding teacher at a Cobb County Middle School made several proselytizing comments to eighth-grade students and appeared to be tailoring her curriculum to comport with her religious views. During a lesson about online predators, for example, the teacher told students that, “according to the Bible, homosexuality is against God’s wishes.” She also informed students that, “the Bible says that one should not mark one’s body with tattoos,” and that she “did not understand why [some] people did not go to church.” AU wrote a letter to the school’s principal and the Cobb County superintendent asking them to put a stop to the teacher’s religious statements in class and to re-evaluate her curricular choices. In response to AU’s letter, the District conducted an inquiry and addressed AU’s concerns. District officials appeared very concerned by the teacher’s actions and indicated that they would like to be informed of any recurrence. Our complainant tells us that the teacher has ceased making religious remarks to students.

**School Board Replaces Prayer With Moment of Silence at Meeting After Warning from Americans United - December 2007, Del Rio, TX:** For years, the San Felipe Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District Board of Trustees had begun its meetings with prayers. At least some of those prayers had explicitly sectarian references. AU wrote a letter to the school district explaining that it is unconstitutional to present prayers at meetings of school boards, and that the sectarian nature of the prayers compounded the constitutional violation. The school district then ceased the prayers and started to hold a moment of silence instead. We will continue to monitor this district to ensure that it does not resume the prayers.

**AU Stops School from Penalizing Choir Members for Refusing to Sing Religious Songs - November 2007, Gunnison, CO:** An October 2007 performance by the Gunnison High School choir featured several religious songs. Choir students were told that if they did not sing the songs, they would receive a reduced or failing grade in choir class. In a letter to the District, AU explained that, while some federal courts have permitted school-

sponsored performances that contain religious music in recognition of the secular educational value they present, the courts have been equally clear that students may not be forced to perform in the religious portions of the program. In response to AU's request that the District provide students with the option of remaining silent during religious portions of future rehearsals and performances, the school informed choir students that they may, in the future, opt out of singing religious songs with no adverse impact on their grades.

**Local Government Halts Plan for Nativity Display After Letter From AU - November 2007, Menominee, MI:** AU received multiple complaints that the Menominee Parks & Recreation Committee was considering erecting a crèche in the bandshell of a public park. In past years, the City had displayed an illuminated manger. In a letter to the City, AU explained that a public entity may display a religious symbol only when it appears among other items that — together — communicate a secular message. The letter cautioned that the City's planned display would run afoul of the Establishment Clause because it would send an unmistakably religious message. According to subsequent media reports, the City took AU's advice and decided not to erect the nativity display. Instead, the local Women's League paid for and set up a holiday display that included snowmen, Christmas presents, and Christmas trees, along with a crèche.

**Americans United Convinces City to Move Crèche Off Public Property - November 2007, Olean, NY:** AU learned that the Mayor of Olean allowed a private group to erect a crèche on the front lawn of the Olean Municipal Building, but would not allow other groups and individuals to put up other holiday displays. We wrote a letter informing the City that the private display violated the Establishment Clause, and asking that the City either remove the crèche from City property or adopt a formal policy allowing other community groups, religious and non-religious, to erect displays there. After receiving AU's letter, the City eventually had the crèche display relocated to private property.

**Letters from AU Prompt School District to Relocate Orchestra Concerts from Church to Secular Venue - November 2007, Reynoldsburg, OH:** AU learned that the Reynoldsburg School District regularly held students' orchestra-class performances at a local Methodist church, where, among other visible religious iconography, a spot-lit 15-foot cross was suspended directly over students as they performed. In November, we sent a letter objecting to the concert location, and warning that requiring students to enter a house of worship filled with religious iconography as a condition of participating in a public-school class violates a basic Establishment Clause principle: the government may not force or influence a person to go to or remain away from a church against his will. We requested that the District relocate the rehearsals and concerts to a secular venue, or at the very least, ensure that all religious iconography inside and outside the church is covered for the duration of the rehearsals and performances. In January, with another orchestra concert fast approaching, AU sent a second letter and a public-records request, again urging the District to move the concerts. The District's attorney informed AU later that day that all future orchestra concerts will take place at District facilities.

**AU Puts a Stop to Teachers Recruiting Students for Religious Club - October 2007, Hawthorne, CA:** AU received a complaint that several teachers at Hawthorne High School were leaders in Young Life ministry — a religious club — and actively promoted Young Life to students during the school day. These teachers displayed Young Life posters in their classrooms, wore Young Life apparel, distributed Young Life flyers, announced

Young Life meetings to students during class, and transformed honors and AP study-group sessions at their homes into impromptu Young Life meetings. AU wrote a complaint letter about these practices to the school district in October 2007. The district initially responded that it had addressed the issues; but, in fact, we determined that the district had not resolved all the violations. Accordingly, we wrote a follow-up letter in April 2008, listing those violations that had not been cured. The district responded that it was evaluating our concerns and would address any further appearance of religious sponsorship. Despite the district's assurances, we received word in November 2008 that some of the practices still continued. We wrote the district a third letter at that time, restating our concerns and asking the district to take action. Finally, in December 2008, we received confirmation from the district that it had halted all the practices about which we had complained.

**School Severs Ties with Teacher-Led Student Gospel Choir After Letter from AU - October 2007, Appleton, WI:** AU learned that an elementary-school teacher in the Appleton Area School District organized and led a student gospel choir. The teacher also arranged for the choir to perform at a gospel concert at a nearby church. AU wrote a letter, explaining that, while such a choir might be permissible if it were student-run and student-initiated, by spearheading and actively participating in the group, the teacher had transformed the choir and the concert into official school activities that violated the Establishment Clause. AU requested that the District cancel the choir's participation in the gospel concert and instruct the teacher that she may no longer lead or remain involved with the group. AU has learned that, after receiving our letter, the school has pledged to sever its ties with the gospel choir.

**AU Convinces School to Erase Web Content Related to Religious Club - October 2007, Naperville, IL:** As the faculty "sponsor" of Naperville Central High School's Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a teacher maintained the group's website, which was hosted on the school's official server and was accessible through the teacher's official school webpage and the school's student-club page. On the website, the teacher described the chapter's expressly religious mission, invited students "interested in growing closer to the Lord" to attend FCA meetings, and posted proselytizing narratives recounting FCA events. AU wrote a letter asking the school to take steps to ensure that the teacher and other school employees do not use their official positions to promote religious activities or religious perspectives to students and to ensure that the FCA is not associated with the school district. In response to our letter, the school district removed all FCA content from the official school website, as well as all links to such content.

**Americans United Halts School Choir's Mandatory Sunday Morning Church Concerts - October 2007, Virginia Beach, VA:** In December 2006, AU received a complaint that a choral teacher at a Virginia Beach high school had arranged a mandatory choral performance of four religious songs at her church's Sunday-morning worship service. AU wrote a letter to District officials, explaining that requiring students to attend and participate in a religious service is impermissible under the Establishment Clause. A few hours after receiving the letter, the District's attorney informed AU that the performance had been cancelled. AU received additional complaints in September 2007 and October 2007 that the teacher had again scheduled a mandatory performance at her church, but those concerts were likewise cancelled after AU complained.

**Charter School Headmaster Ceases Pervasive Religious Activity at School After Warning from Americans United - September 2007, Washington DC:** AU received complaints that the headmaster of the Washington Latin School — a public charter school — repeatedly made religious comments at his morning meetings with students, led students in prayer at convocations, and invited members of the clergy to deliver prayers at graduation ceremonies. AU wrote a letter to the school and the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, warning that the headmaster’s conduct violated the Establishment Clause and asking that the school refrain from presenting prayers at any school events or activities and that the headmaster cease making religious remarks to students. According to AU’s complainants, the religious remarks and prayers stopped after AU sent its letter. The school’s headmaster also announced two months later that he planned to resign at the end of the 2007-08 academic year.

**AU Gets City Counsel to Swap Out The Lord’s Prayer for Secular Invocation at Meetings - September 2007, Akron, OH:** AU learned that the Akron City Council opened its meetings by reciting The Lord’s Prayer. AU wrote a letter to the Council, explaining that the Establishment Clause forbids legislative bodies from using sectarian prayer. The Council responded to AU’s letter by announcing that it would cease opening meetings with The Lord’s Prayer and use a nonsectarian invocation instead.

**School Strips Official Support from Modesty Fashion Show After Letter from Americans United - September 2007, Kimberly, WI:** Several people contacted AU to complain about a modesty fashion show co-sponsored by the Kimberly Area School District and Pure Freedom, an Evangelical Christian organization that aims to “equip men and women . . . to experience a vibrant, passionate marriage which portrays the love Christ has for his Bride the church.” The program, entitled “Secret Keeper Girl — The Bod Squad Tour,” was geared toward schoolgirls in grades three through six, and included a faith-based message as well as performances by Christian musicians. In a letter to the District, AU explained that the District’s co-sponsorship of the religiously themed event violated the Establishment Clause. After receiving AU’s letter, the District’s counsel informed AU that the District would revoke approval for the event to take place at a District school, remove all advertising for the event from District schools, and send a note to parents and students disclaiming any association with the event.

**AU Extinguishes Fire Department’s Aid to Religious Statue’s National Tour - September 2007, Jackson, NJ:** AU received several complaints that the Jackson Mills Fire Company was using firefighters and a fire truck to transport a statue of “Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin” (an Americanized version of the Virgin Mary) from church to church as part of a national tour of cathedrals that was set to culminate in the statue being installed permanently at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. AU sent a letter to the fire company, explaining that its conduct impermissibly endorsed religion. After receiving AU’s letter, the fire chief and the fire company’s attorney both said that the fire company would not transport the statue again.

**Letter from Americans United Prompts School to Drop Religious Hebrew Language Textbook - August 2007, Fort Lauderdale, FL:** Ben Gamla Charter School is a public charter school that offers a Hebrew-immersion program to students. In a letter objecting to the school’s use of a Hebrew-language textbook that contained numerous religious references, AU explained that, although it is permissible to teach Hebrew as a

foreign language, it is constitutionally impermissible to do so using religiously themed instructional materials. AU's letter requested that the school select a different textbook and review the remainder of its Hebrew-language curriculum to ensure that it is free of similar religious content. In response, the school's attorney (The Becket Fund) informed AU that the school had abandoned its plans to use the objectionable textbook. AU continues to monitor the school to ensure that it complies with the Establishment Clause.

**Public School Drops Religious Content from Achievement Certificates Awarded to Elementary School Children After Letter from AU - July 2007, Iowa City, IA:** AU received a complaint about the Iowa City Community School District's "Optimist Club Good Reader Program," which encourages reading among students in the third and fourth grades. Upon completion of the program, students received a recognition card stating, among other promises, that they would "acknowledge that belief in God gives purpose to life." AU wrote a letter to the District, informing officials that encouraging students to avow a belief in God violates the Establishment Clause. One week after receiving AU's letter, the District's superintendent informed us that the religious references would be omitted from the recognition card.

**Americans United Halts Bible Distribution in Public Elementary School - July 2007, Taylor, TX:** AU learned that members of the Gideons were permitted to set up a table to distribute New Testament Bibles to elementary-school students during the school day. The school even altered students' routes to and from classes in order to allow students to pick up the Bibles. In a letter to the school, AU explained that federal courts have routinely held such distributions to be unconstitutional, especially when targeted at elementary-school students. The District decided the following week that the Gideons would no longer be allowed to distribute Bibles at the school.

**AU Scrubs Religious Affirmation from Whiteboard at Military Base High School - July 2007, Seoul, South Korea:** AU received complaints regarding a religious affirmation written on the classroom whiteboard at a high school on a U.S. military base in Seoul, South Korea. The affirmation stated, "When we draw near to God, our minds are refreshed and our strength is renewed." In a letter to school officials, AU explained that the affirmation, which was visible to students, was inappropriate in a government-funded school. According to our complainants, after receiving our letter, the teacher erased the affirmation from the whiteboard and has not repeated the violation.

**Americans United Stops Bill Giving State Funds to Religious Organizations - June 2007, Nashville, TN:** AU learned that the Tennessee legislature was considering legislation to establish a Community Enhancement Grant Program, under which individual legislators could earmark surplus budget funds for religious organizations, including churches. AU wrote a letter to the Tennessee Attorney General — whom the legislature had asked to issue an opinion regarding the constitutionality of the proposed earmark program — explaining that the government is prohibited from giving direct cash aid to pervasively religious organizations. The letter also explained that the program could be modified to create a fund open to religious and non-religious organizations alike, and that, if such an option were pursued, the program would need to include safeguards to ensure that government funding is not used for sectarian purposes. After receiving AU's letter, the state legislature passed an alternate version of the program, establishing a \$20 million general-grant fund instead of the earmark scheme. AU then sent a follow-up letter to the

Tennessee Secretary of State, who is responsible for administering the general-grant program, urging him to ensure that the grant application and agreement include the constitutionally required safeguards. The Secretary subsequently took AU's advice and amended the grant application and agreement to include the required safeguards.

**Community College Cancels Creationism Course After Warning from Americans United - June 2007, McCook, NE:** AU learned that McCook Community College planned to offer a course on "creation science" during the Fall 2007 semester. According to the instructor, students would explore "[t]he Garden of Eden and life on earth before the flood and the major changes which have taken place since that time," and would examine "the same evidence that evolutionary science looks at, but from a different perspective, that is to say, from a Biblical perspective." In a letter to the college, AU explained that federal courts have consistently held that creationism and its progeny cannot lawfully be taught in public educational institutions. After receiving our letter, the college president informed us that the course had been cancelled.

**AU Halts Plan to Hire Chaplain for Football Team at Public University - June 2007, Ames, IA:** AU received a complaint that Iowa State University was considering a proposal to hire a full-time chaplain for its football team. According to news reports, the university's football coach, who authored the proposal, told the Fellowship of Christian Athletes that he was motivated by his own relationship with Christ. AU wrote a letter urging the university president to reject the religiously motivated proposal, and explaining that courts have upheld government-provided chaplains only in cases where it was necessary to accommodate the Free Exercise rights of those who would otherwise lack access to religious services, such as certain military personnel and prisoners. The university president acknowledged AU's letter and rejected the original chaplaincy proposal, instead approving the appointment of a life-skills mentor for football players. The mentoring program will be closely monitored by the university to ensure that player participation in the program is voluntary and that no religious viewpoints are promoted.

**Sheriff Kicks Religious Addiction Counseling Group Out of Publicly Owned House in Response to Americans United Investigation - May 2007, Falls River, MA:** The Sheriff of Bristol County purchased a house with county money and turned it over to Teen Challenge of New England to run a drug rehabilitation program. Teen Challenge attempts to "cure" drug addiction by immersing program participants in religious instruction and converting them to a fundamentalist form of Christianity. AU wrote a letter to the Sheriff, informing him that providing a county-owned facility free of charge to a religious organization to run a proselytizing program was unconstitutional. The Sheriff initially had a very hostile reaction, holding a press conference in which he vigorously argued that there was nothing improper about the relationship. However, after we sent a public-records request concerning the matter, the Sheriff expelled Teen Challenge from the house.

**AU Convinces Public Middle School to Move Awards Ceremony from Church to Secular Location - May 2007, Naples, FL:** Pine Ridge Middle School in Collier County maintained a practice of holding its award ceremonies at a church. A large, uncovered cross appeared on the wall in the place where the ceremonies were held. AU wrote a letter to the county school board explaining that it is unconstitutional to require students to enter a house of worship in order to be honored for their achievements. After receiving no formal



response from the school board, we sent a public-records request concerning the school's practice. In May 2008, we learned that this year's award ceremony would be held at a secular location. We will continue to monitor the school in the future to ensure that the ceremony is not returned to a house of worship.

**Air Force Bails Out of Religious Activities After Taking Flack from Americans United - May 2007, Stone Mountain, GA:** AU learned that the U.S. Air Force and Army were planning to take part in a three-day religious event over Memorial Day weekend. Organized by Task Force Patriot — an Evangelical Christian group that claims to “exist[] for the purpose of sharing the fullness of life in Jesus Christ with all U.S. military, military veterans and families” — the event was set to include a host of Evangelical Christian speakers, a worship service, Army parachute-jump demonstrations, and hourly Air Force B-2 stealth-bomber flyovers. Promotional materials identified the U.S. Air Force as a cosponsor for the program, and an active-duty Major was slated to introduce the B-2 flyover crew (during the middle of the worship service) and to offer his religious testimony as part of the program. AU wrote a letter to both the Air Force and the Army, explaining that the military's planned participation in the religious celebration was unconstitutional, and urging officials to (a) retract military sponsorship of the weekend, (b) ensure that any military participation was segregated from worship services or other religious events, and (c) mandate that military personnel refrain from engaging in religious activities in their official capacities. In response to AU's letter, the Army's Silver Wings Parachute Team pulled out of the event entirely; and the Air Force agreed to separate all its activities from religious events, limiting its B-2 flyovers to once a day and cancelling the flyovers planned for Sunday's worship service.

**Americans United Stops Sectarian Prayer at County Commission Meetings - May 2007, Sarasota, FL:** AU learned that several invocations delivered at meetings for the Sarasota County Board of Commissioners were Christian. AU wrote a letter to the Board, reminding commissioners that sectarian legislative prayers are constitutionally impermissible, and that the Board is obligated to take steps to ensure that future invocations are nonsectarian. A commissioner thanked AU for the letter and stated that the Board has tried to ensure that all prayers are nonsectarian and is committed to preventing sectarian prayers from recurring in the future.

**Art Teacher's Proselytization Draws to a Close After Letter from AU - April 2007, Paducah, KY:** AU received a complaint that an elementary-school art teacher made several religiously proselytizing comments to second-grade students. According to our complainant, after a lesson on the ancient Egyptian practice of including small personal artifacts in tombs in order to facilitate entry into heaven, the teacher told the class that they had no need for this practice because they “had Jesus,” and then informed students that Jesus saved millions of people. She also recounted to students the Biblical creation story. After receiving AU's letter objecting to the teacher's remarks, the school's principal informed AU that he had met with the teacher regarding the incident and that he would discuss with all staff the requirement that government remain neutral with respect to religion.

**AU Dashes Plans for Ten Commandments Monument - March 2007, Saginaw, MI:** AU learned that the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners was considering a proposal to place a Ten Commandments monument in the lobby of the Saginaw County

Governmental Center. The proposal's sponsor, a county commissioner, made several statements in the press revealing his religious purpose. In a letter to the Board, AU urged the commissioners to reject the proposal, and explained that the federal courts would be unlikely to approve of the proposed new monument because of the sponsor's clear religious purpose, the prominent and solitary placement of the monument at the seat of the county's government, and the community uproar that the monument had already caused. After receiving AU's letter, and in the face of opposition from other commissioners, the sponsoring commissioner declined to bring his proposal to a vote, and so the idea was abandoned.

**Americans United Gets Complainant Out of Parking Ticket - March 2007, Jim Thorpe, PA:** AU received a complaint that the Jim Thorpe Police Department was ticketing people for parking in church-designated parking on public city streets. AU sent the police department several letters, explaining that the City's special arrangement with a church to enforce church-only parking — and the resulting ticket issued to our complainant — likely violated the Establishment Clause. We subsequently requested all public records related to the parking ticket and the parking policy. In response to AU's letters, the City admitted that no policy existed authorizing it to enforce church-only parking, and it rescinded our complainant's ticket.

**City Council Stops Sectarian Prayer Practice in Response to Letter from AU - March 2007, Lowell, MA:** AU learned that the Lowell City Council has, for years, recited the Lord's Prayer at the start of each meeting. After receiving complaints about the practice, the Council planned to consider whether it should continue the sectarian prayers, switch to nonsectarian prayers, or adopt a proposed plan to incorporate sectarian prayers from other religions by alternating or rotating them with the Lord's Prayer. In a letter to the City Council, AU advised members that sectarian prayers — including the Lord's Prayer — are constitutionally impermissible. The letter also noted that the plan to rotate among sectarian prayers would merely compound, not cure, the constitutional violation. After receiving AU's letter, the Council agreed to recite only nonsectarian prayers at the start of future Council meetings.

**Americans United Convinces City Council Not to Adopt Policy Permitting Sectarian Prayers at Meetings - February 2007, Worcester, MA:** After learning that the Worcester City Council planned to discuss the legality of opening meetings with prayers delivered by local clergy, AU wrote a letter to the Council, advising it of the constitutional boundaries within which legislative prayer must take place. The Council decided to continue allowing nonsectarian prayers, and instructed the city clerk, who invites the clergy members to offer the invocation, to inform clergy that prayers must be nonsectarian. Our Massachusetts chapter president continues to monitor the situation and reports that prayers have since been nonsectarian.

**AU Ends Christian Prayers at Board of Commissioners Meetings - February 2007, Yadkinville, NC:** AU received a complaint that the Yadkin County Board of Commissioners frequently opened meetings with Christian invocations. In a letter to the Board, AU explained that legislative bodies may not use language specific to any faith in opening their sessions with prayer. The letter asked the Board to take steps to ensure that future prayers at Board meetings are nonsectarian. Although one commissioner attempted, after receiving AU's letter, to convince other Board members to enact a formal policy

allowing sectarian prayers, the proposal was rejected. Since that time, the Board appears to be following the law.

**Letter from AU Prompts School Superintendent to Move High School Graduation from Church to Secular Venue - January 2007, Rockville, MD:** After receiving several opinion letters from a local law firm advising that it would be legally permissible to hold high-school graduation ceremonies in churches, the Montgomery County School Board decided to revisit its policy requiring Montgomery County high schools to hold graduations in secular venues. AU wrote a letter to the Board, correcting several misstatements of law made in the opinion letters, and informing the Board that its current policy was the only way to protect students' First Amendment rights. After receiving AU's letter, the Board nevertheless voted to allow Montgomery Blair High School to hold its 2007 commencement exercises at Jericho City of Praise, a Pentecostal church covered with religious iconography, including a large sign declaring, "Jesus is The Lord!!!" But the superintendent of schools reversed course one day later in response to public outrage and AU's continued protestations, setting aside funds to allow the high school to rent a neutral venue. (AU had once before addressed this matter in a 2005 letter to the District, taking issue with a plan to hold several high-school graduations in local churches. That letter resulted in those graduations being moved to secular venues, and led to the passage of the policy barring District schools from holding commencement exercises in churches.)

**AU Letter Ensures Public School Board Rejects Extreme Religious Bible Curriculum - January 2007, Howell, MI:** AU learned that the Howell Public Schools Board of Education was considering adopting a Bible curriculum designed by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools — a private religious organization created to spread the Christian faith. AU wrote a letter to the Board, informing officials that the National Council on Bible Curriculum is run by leaders of the Religious Right, including those who advocate an extreme vision of theocratic government based on a literal reading of the Bible. The letter also explained that the proposed Bible-class curriculum has already been held unconstitutional for use in public schools, and urged the Board to reject it in full. The Board agreed, deciding at its next meeting not to approve the curriculum.

## 2006

**City Abandons Plan to Support Religious Social Service Provider After AU Letter - December 2006, Fairfax, VA:** AU received a complaint that the City of Fairfax planned to purchase property in nearby Falls Church for use by the Lamb Center, a religious provider of social services to the homeless. Because the Lamb Center was unable to afford the \$2.6 million parcel of land, the City intended to rent it to the Center for \$5,000 per month — far below the market rate — until the Center could raise funds to purchase the property from the City. In addition, the City planned to appropriate \$500,000 to support the Center. AU wrote a letter to the mayor and the City Council, explaining that, because the Lamb Center is a religious institution that proselytizes its indigent residents, the City's purchase of the property, its planned rental and sale to the Center, and its proposed \$500,000 allocation to support the Center would violate the Establishment Clause. A month later — after receiving AU's letter and under pressure from local homeowners — the City withdrew the plan.

**AU Puts an End to Public-School Teacher’s Lunchtime Prayer Sessions - December 2006, Wayne, WV:** AU received a complaint that an elementary-school teacher regularly recited a lunchtime prayer with her students during which she thanked God for their food. In a letter to the school district, AU explained that, although students may voluntarily join together for prayer, the Establishment Clause prohibits public-school staff from initiating or taking part in religious activities with students. After receiving AU’s letter, the principal of the elementary school informed us that she had addressed the matter with the teacher and that the teacher’s practice of leading students in prayer would end.

**Public-School Students Not Required to Perform Religious Songs at Choral Teacher’s Church, Thanks to AU - December 2006, Virginia Beach, VA:** AU received a complaint that a choral teacher at a Virginia Beach high school had arranged a mandatory choral performance of four religious songs at her church’s Sunday-morning worship service. AU wrote a letter to the district superintendent, principal, and school board, explaining that requiring students to attend and participate in religious services is impermissible under the Establishment Clause. A few hours after receiving AU’s letter, the District’s attorney informed AU that the performance at the church had been cancelled.

**AU Keeps Religious Recruitment and Proselytization Out of Junior-High Assembly - December 2006, Colville, WA:** AU received a complaint regarding a planned “Power Team” assembly at a junior high school. “The Power Team” is a thoroughly religious organization that describes itself as a “strength based ministry specializing in growing churches through Family-Focused Evangelism.” The group’s website boasts that “2-3 out of every ten attending accept Jesus,” and that its presentation is one of the most “[p]owerful, [i]mpacting, and [e]ffective presentations of the Gospels in the [w]orld.” AU wrote a letter to the school district, noting that, although the group’s public-school presentations generally involve secular themes like self-esteem and character education, The Power Team often uses these performances to encourage students to attend after-school Christian events. The letter explained that allowing the group to use a school-sponsored assembly as a platform to invite students to a religious event is unconstitutional. In response to AU’s letter, the District specifically warned the group not to include any religious content in its presentation or to invite students to attend off-campus religious events.

**AU Convinces County Council to Rescind Opening Prayer Policy - October 2006, Walhalla, SC:** AU received a complaint that the Oconoe County Council regularly opens its meetings with Christian prayer. Despite complaints from local citizens, and against the advice of the County’s attorney, the Council refused to change this practice. One Council member — a reverend who often delivers the sectarian prayers — declared that he hoped objectors would bring a legal challenge to the prayers. AU wrote a letter to the County Council, explaining that the U.S. Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit have clearly ruled that such sectarian prayers run afoul of the Establishment Clause, and warning that the Council member may get his wish for a legal challenge if the Council refused to end the practice. On February 7, 2007, the County Council voted to rescind its prayer policy and to begin meetings with a moment of silence instead.

**Federal Prisons Cancel Preferential Religious Program at AU’s Request - October 2006, Federal Bureau of Prisons:** AU learned that the Federal Bureau of Prisons had

issued a solicitation seeking proposals for the provision of single-faith, residential re-entry programs at six federal prisons. The solicitation created a preference for religious programs and organizations over secular ones; created a preference for instruction in a single faith over multi-faith programming; appeared designed to favor one particular religious organization; and contained no prohibitions against the use of federal funds to support religious activity. AU wrote a letter in April 2006 to the Attorney General and to the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, asking them either to withdraw the solicitation or to eliminate its constitutional infirmities. AU attorneys then met with Bureau and Justice Department officials. On October 26, 2006, the Bureau cancelled its solicitation for single-faith re-entry programs.

**AU Stops Public-School Involvement in Church-based Christian Abstinence Program - October 2006, Troup, TX:** AU received a complaint that a public high school in Texas was promoting (and effectively planning to operate) a Christian abstinence-only education program at two local churches. The seven-week course, entitled “True Love Waits,” requires students to commit to God and pledge sexual purity until they enter a Bible-based marriage. Although the program was to be held during the school day at two local churches, District-employed teachers — who wanted to “share their faith” with students — were set to be instructors, the District distributed fliers promoting the course, and the District planned to transport students to the churches using District-owned school buses. In addition, the District promised students that they would not have to make up any schoolwork missed while attending the course. AU wrote a letter advising the District that its involvement with the course violated the Establishment Clause, and asking that the District either cancel the program or entirely disassociate from it. The District superintendent quickly responded, informing AU that the course had been cancelled and that the District would not be involved in any similar programs in the future.

**Prison Ends Mandatory Evangelical Christian Rehabilitation Program as a Result of AU Letter - September 2006, Milwaukee, WI:** AU received a complaint that the Milwaukee Women’s Correctional Center had scheduled a mandatory meeting for all inmates with representatives from Prison Fellowship Ministries. Prison Fellowship Ministries is the Evangelical Christian organization that operates the Innerchange Freedom Initiative prison rehabilitation program that AU successfully challenged in Iowa. AU wrote to the prison to advise officials that coercing inmates to attend religious programs violates the Establishment Clause. Prison officials informed AU that, as a result of the letter, the prison had made attendance at the meeting voluntary. Prison officials also expressed their desire to comply in the future with the requirements of the Establishment Clause.

**School District Makes Sure Teachers Stay Out of Student Prayer After AU Warning - September 2006, Bowling Green, KY:** AU received complaints regarding plans for some Warren County School District teachers to pray with students during a “See You at the Pole” event. AU wrote a letter to the school district, informing officials that, although students may gather in a group for prayer on school grounds before the school day, it is unconstitutional for teachers, staff, or other District employees to participate in or promote the event. District officials informed AU that, as a result of the letter, they had made clear to all District employees that they were not permitted to take part in the event or promote it to students.

**Town Abandons Preferential Leasing for Church After AU Letter - July 2006, Greenfield, NH:** In July 2006, AU wrote a letter to the town of Greenfield objecting to the town's renting its meeting house to a church for \$1200 per year — a price significantly below market value — while simultaneously charging town residents who wished to use the first floor of the meeting house \$60 per use. At that time, in anticipation of the 2009 expiration of its current lease, the church had submitted a new proposed lease to the Board of Selectmen, which, if approved, would have run for twenty-five years with an option to renew for ninety-nine additional years. Urging the Board to reject the church's proposed lease, AU's letter explained that renting the facility to the church for a fee significantly below market value would give special (and substantial) governmental benefits to the church, impermissibly advancing religion. We recently learned that the town no longer plans to rent the meeting house to the church after its lease expires in 2009, and that the congregation has instead purchased nearby property, where it expects to build a new church.

**AU's Threat of Legal Action Convinces State Taxing Authority to Cease Longstanding Religious Discrimination - May 2006, Irving, TX:** AU successfully resolved a decade-long dispute between the Texas Comptroller's Office and the North Texas Church of Freethought over a religious tax exemption. The church, which is comprised of atheists and freethinkers, first applied for a religious tax exemption in 1997, but was denied the exemption because the church's belief system did not include belief in a "supreme being." In 1999, AU wrote a letter to the state Comptroller on behalf of the church, explaining that the church met the requirements of the tax-exemption statute, and that denial of an exemption would amount to unconstitutional religious discrimination. The Comptroller's office again denied the exemption request. But in 2003, the Texas Court of Appeals ruled in another case that the Comptroller's conditioning of a religious tax exemption on the requirement that the religion espouse a belief in a supreme being was unconstitutional under the First Amendment. AU therefore wrote another letter on behalf of the church in December 2005. After months of stonewalling by the Comptroller's office, AU sent a final demand letter in May 2006, threatening legal action if the Comptroller did not grant the exemption. After receiving that demand, the Comptroller's office granted the exemption, allowing the Church not only to cease paying taxes but also to obtain retroactive reimbursement of the taxes it has paid since 2001.

**High School Will Not Hold Commencement Ceremony in Church, Thanks to AU - May 2006, Roseville, CA:** AU learned that the Roseville Joint Union High School District planned to relocate Roseville High School's June commencement ceremony from its usual venue — the school's football stadium — to the Adventure Christian Church. The decision was made to accommodate plans to replace the turf at the field. AU wrote a letter to school officials, informing them that holding the graduation in a church would be unconstitutional, and encouraging them to delay the renovations to the football stadium for two weeks so that the ceremony could take place there. The letter also noted that use of the church as the new venue would constitute a particularly egregious violation in light of the fact that several secular alternative venues were available. After receiving the letter, the District's superintendent informed AU that the graduation would be moved back to the football field.

**City No Longer Sponsors, Organizes, or Promotes National Day of Prayer Event After AU Letter - April 2006, Portsmouth, VA:** AU received a complaint from a local citizen regarding the City's 2006 National Day of Prayer Celebration. City officials used city

resources to organize and promote the prayer. AU wrote a letter to the City, informing officials that, while they have the right to participate in their individual capacities in National Day of Prayer events, the Establishment Clause bars them from using their public employment or public resources to sponsor such activities. Subsequent monitoring of the City indicates that officials have ceased their impermissible involvement with these events.

**AU Makes Sure High School Graduation Will be Prayer-Free - April 2006, Mt.**

**Orab, OH:** AU learned that Western Brown High School had a practice of including prayer at its annual graduation ceremonies. In May 2005, pastors from the local Church of Christ and First Baptist Church delivered an invocation and a benediction at the high school's commencement ceremony. In an effort to prevent a repeat of the Establishment Clause violation during the high school's May 2006 graduation, AU wrote a letter to school officials informing them that any prayer — whether offered by a school official, outside clergy, or a student — is impermissible at public-school graduations. The District responded in a letter stating that no prayer would be included in the 2006 commencement ceremony.

**City Council Stops Sectarian Invocations After AU Letter - March 2006, San**

**Antonio, TX:** AU received a complaint from a San Antonio resident who was upset about the City Council's use of Christian invocations to open regular meetings. The prayers often invoked Jesus and included other references to Christianity. AU wrote a letter to the City Council, informing members that the sectarian prayers are unconstitutional. The complainant has reported to AU that invocations delivered since that time have been nonsectarian.

**AU Persuades Mayor to Address City Council's Practice of Sectarian Prayer -**

**March 2006, York, SC:** AU learned that the York City Council opened its regular meetings with sectarian prayers offered in the name of Jesus Christ. Council members confirmed this practice in an article published in the local newspaper. We wrote a letter to the City Council, informing members that legislative prayer must be nonsectarian. York Mayor Edward Lee called AU in response to the letter, and promised to address AU's concerns with the other Council members and to be more vigilant about the issue in order to avoid future sectarian prayers. Mayor Lee also stated that he would start a discussion with other Council members about entirely eliminating the prayers and replacing them with a moment of silence.

**School District Gives Teacher's Lesson-Plan an F After AU Reveals Creationist**

**Agenda - February 2006, Franklin, NC:** AU received a complaint about a research-paper topic assigned to Franklin High School's tenth-grade honors-biology class. The assignment required students to research and write a paper presenting "specific scientific evidences" for creationism and evolution. According to the complainant, the biology teacher assigns the research paper each year. AU wrote a letter to school-district officials, informing them that the assignment raised serious constitutional problems. The letter pointed out that the assignment contained specific code words developed and used by proponents of creationism — thereby revealing the teacher's religious purpose and agenda. We also explained that the assignment suggested that creationism is a scientific theory for which scientific support exists, and that it represents an alternative scientific perspective to evolution. The letter informed the District that public schools are prohibited by the Establishment Clause from transmitting to students such religious messages. Responding

to AU's concerns, the school district informed us that the assignment had been reviewed and would be changed to meet the requirements of the Establishment Clause.

## 2005

**AU Takes Down Link to Christian Wrestling from Public-School Website - December 2005, Canton, GA:** AU received a complaint about inappropriate religious content on the public website of Freedom Middle School. Specifically, AU learned that a web page created by a teacher at the school directed students to the website for Ultimate Christian Wrestling Ministries, an evangelical Christian organization, and contained statements about the teacher's religious faith. AU wrote a letter to school officials informing them that the content of the webpage violated the Establishment Clause. The assistant superintendent for school operations informed AU that the web-site link had been removed. The teacher's statements about his religious faith were also removed from the webpage.

**Principal Promises No More Prayers at School-Sponsored Events After AU Letter - November 2005, Ocean City, NJ:** An Ocean City High School student contacted AU to inform us that a local reverend said a prayer at a school-sponsored assembly celebrating the school's new "Freedom Shrine." AU sent a letter to school officials informing them that inviting a clergy member to say a prayer at a school-sponsored event is unconstitutional. The principal of Ocean City High School responded to the letter, stating that this type of situation would not occur again.

**School District Kicks Minister Out of Middle School After AU Exposes Lunchtime Bible-Study Group - October 2005, Bandon, OR:** AU learned that a minister was leading a meeting of a Bible-study group at Harbor Lights Middle School during the school lunch period. AU wrote a letter to school officials informing them that allowing a minister to hold religious meetings at a public school during the school day violates the Establishment Clause. The letter explained that, although the federal Equal Access Act permits student-led religious clubs to meet during non-curricular times, the Act bars outside persons from leading or attending student-club meetings. In her response to the letter, the school-district superintendent stated that she was unaware that a minister had been leading student-club meetings and that she has informed the school principal that regular visits by a minister or any other visitor to student-club meetings are prohibited.

**American Citizenship—Religious Oath Not Required—Thanks to AU - September 2005, San Diego, CA:** A petitioner for U.S. citizenship contacted AU four days before his naturalization ceremony after his interviewing officer had denied his request to swear a non-religious oath of citizenship (excluding the words "so help me God"). AU immediately contacted the director of the San Diego citizenship office, as well as other U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials, to inform them that federal regulations require petitioners for citizenship to be given the opportunity to swear a non-religious oath of citizenship. The letter asked that our complainant be allowed to swear such an oath during his naturalization ceremony. The director of the San Diego citizenship office contacted AU on the morning of the ceremony to explain that the complainant would be given a non-religious oath. The complainant later confirmed that he was able to take a non-religious oath at the ceremony. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights



and Civil Liberties has referred this incident to the Customs and Immigration Service for review.

**AU Takes Religious Portraits Off of Junior High School Walls - July 2005, Anna, IL:** AU received a complaint about several portraits of Jesus that had been hanging in the main hallway of Anna Junior High School for at least fifty years. AU wrote a letter to school officials explaining that these portraits conveyed a message to students that the school endorsed Christianity in violation of the Establishment Clause, and asked them to remove the pictures. The school-district superintendent responded to the letter, stating that the portraits had been removed.

**Zoo Cancels Plans for Creationist Exhibit After AU Letter - July 2005, Tulsa, OK:** AU learned that the Tulsa Park and Recreation Board voted to add an exhibit to the Tulsa Zoo depicting the biblical account of God's creation of the world, as described in the Book of Genesis. AU wrote a letter to the board members advising them that the planned display of this sectarian exhibit on public property would violate the Establishment Clause and asking them to cancel the exhibit. The Board reversed its decision to add the creationist display to the zoo.

**AU Obtains School District Commitment to Prevent Distribution of Religious Materials at School-Sponsored Assemblies - July 2005, Battle Creek, MI:** AU received a complaint that the Seven Project — a Christian group affiliated with the Assemblies of God church — performed at a Harper Creek High School assembly. Although the assembly involved secular themes, the Seven Project distributed flyers encouraging students to attend a Christian event at a local church later that night. AU wrote to school-district officials to inform them that providing this opportunity for the Seven Project to invite students to a religious event is unconstitutional. An attorney for the school district responded to the letter, promising that the school district would commit to ensuring that no religious organizations are allowed to distribute religious materials at school-sponsored assemblies and that the superintendent would issue a directive to principals to ensure they are aware of this policy.

**AU Foils Church's Plan to Host High School Graduations - May 2005, Montgomery County, MD:** AU discovered that several public high schools in the Montgomery County school district were planning to hold their graduation ceremonies at the Jericho City of Praise, a large church affiliate of the Church of Jesus Christ. AU wrote to district officials, asking them to ensure that there would be no religious content in the graduation ceremony and that all religious symbols at the facility would be removed or covered. The district's attorney replied that the school district would meet these requirements and would seek out a secular venue for future graduations.

**Superintendent Prohibits Invitations to Attend Proselytizing Events at AU's Request - May 2005, Kalispell, MT:** AU learned that several schools in the Flathead County school district planned to host performances of Mike Hagen's Strength Team at school assemblies. Although the content of the Strength Team's assemblies are generally secular, AU has received many complaints about performances of the Strength Team at public schools due to the group's practice of inviting students to after-school religious events. AU wrote to the district superintendent, as well as the principals of the schools where the Strength Team planned to perform, to warn them that this group had a history of

abusing its access to students at school assemblies by encouraging students to attend proselytizing events. The letter urged these school officials either to cancel the assemblies or to take steps to ensure that the Strength Team would not use the assemblies as vehicles to access students for purposes of proselytization. The school-district superintendent immediately informed AU that the Strength Team would be prohibited from inviting students to proselytizing events.

**Air Force Creates Task Force to Investigate Academy After AU Identifies Religious Wrongdoing - April 2005, Arlington, VA:** After receiving numerous complaints about extremely troubling religious policies and practices at the United States Air Force Academy, AU wrote a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld urging him to take steps to correct these problems and ensure that the Academy is open to cadets of all religious faiths and those with none. Just four days after receiving the letter, the Air Force announced that it would form a task force to investigate AU's allegations of religious intolerance at the Academy. The task force has now issued its report acknowledging wrongdoing.

**AU Gives Health Teacher a Permanent Timeout on Allowing Class-time Religious Distributions - March 2005, Carthage, IL:** A parent of a Carthage High School student complained to AU that her child's health teacher allowed guest speakers to distribute religious literature to students during class. AU wrote to school district officials, explaining that permitting outsiders to distribute religious materials to students during class violates the Establishment Clause and asking them to ensure that such distributions do not happen again. The superintendent informed AU that "the problem has been taken care of." According to the complainant, the health teacher was admonished not to allow outsiders to distribute material in his classes in the future.

**County Council Directs No More Sectarian Invocations at AU's Urging - March 2005, Prince George's County, MD:** AU learned that the Prince George's County Council was regularly opening its meetings with a Christian prayer. AU wrote to Council members, explaining that although the Supreme Court has upheld the practice of legislative prayer, such prayers must be nonsectarian to be constitutional. The letter urged the Council members to refrain from opening their sessions with any prayer in order to respect the beliefs of all the county's citizens, or at least to ensure that prayers are nonsectarian. A county official informed AU that the County Council would direct clergy members who are invited to give prayers before Council meetings that their prayers must be nonsectarian.

**Superintendent Gives Teacher a Lesson in Staying Out of Student Religious Clubs, Thanks to AU - February 2005, Little Elm, TX:** AU received word from the parent of a Lakeside Junior High student that one of the school's teachers was leading the meetings of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. AU wrote to school district officials to inform them that, under the Equal Access Act, school officials are not permitted to participate actively in student religious clubs. The superintendent responded that he had not been aware of the situation, and that, upon receiving AU's letter, he met with the school principal to confirm that all teachers are aware that they are "not to participate in the proceedings of student clubs in any manner." The complainant will monitor the school's actions.

**No More Mealtime Prayers Over the Loudspeaker at Adult Center After AU Letter - February 2005, Dardanelle, AR:** AU received a complaint from a Dardanelle senior citizen that the state-funded Dardanelle Senior Adult Center was requiring him and other patrons of the Center to listen to a Christian prayer broadcast over the Center's public-address system before eating government-subsidized meals. AU wrote to the operator of the Center and several Arkansas officials explaining that compelling seniors to listen to a prayer before they can receive a government benefit is unconstitutional, and requesting that they stop this practice. The complainant informed AU that the Center has changed its policy to prohibit the broadcasting of prayers over the public-address system. The Center continues to allow individuals to pray at their tables before meals.

**Elementary School Removes Church Advertising Sign After AU Letter - February 2005, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL:** A Ponte Vedra Beach parent contacted AU to report that a church that meets in her child's elementary school on Sundays was permitted to place a large, permanent sign in front of the school advertising its church services. AU wrote to the principal of the school and the superintendent of the school district to inform them that the district's authorization of this sign constituted an endorsement of the church's activities in violation of the Establishment Clause, and to request that they remove the sign. According to the complainant, the school district removed the church's sign after receiving AU's letter.

**City Commission Stops Printing Bible-Verse Calendars After AU Informs City Government - January 2005, Greer, SC:** The Greer Commission of Public Works had published and was distributing a 2005 calendar that featured religious artwork and Bible verses for each day. AU wrote to the mayor and city-council members to inform them that it is unconstitutional for a municipal entity to endorse religion, and asked them to stop distributing the calendars immediately. The Commission subsequently issued a statement confirming that it had decided to cease distributing the religious calendar and that future calendars would feature a community theme rather than a religious one.

**AU Puts a Hold on County's Plan to Facilitate Ten Commandments Display - January 2005, Montgomery County, IN:** A local resident informed AU that the Montgomery County Commissioners were considering a proposal to sell a thirty-square-foot plot of land on the grounds of the courthouse to a private organization for the purpose of displaying a Ten Commandments monument. AU wrote to the commissioners to inform them that the proposed sale would violate the Establishment Clause and to urge them not to approve the transaction. The complainant informed AU that the commissioners decided to wait until the Supreme Court ruled on the Ten Commandments cases (McCreary and Van Orden) before voting on the sale.

## 2004

**AU Turns County's Exclusive Display Into an Inclusive Public Forum - December 2004, Polk County, FL:** A local resident informed AU that a church erected a creche on the grounds of the county administration building. We wrote a letter to the county commission explaining that private religious displays on public property constitute governmental endorsement of religion in violation of the Establishment Clause, and requesting that the county remove the display. Instead of removing the display, the county opened up the property as a public forum to anyone who submitted a request to the county

to erect a display. As a result, a display honoring Zoroastrianism was placed next to the creche.

**AU Letter Makes Sure Christian Creche Will Not Stand Alone - December 2004, Reynoldsburg, OH:** AU received a complaint from a local resident that the city planned to display a creche in front of a city building. We wrote a letter to the mayor and city council explaining that government-sponsored sectarian displays are unconstitutional, and requesting that the city cancel its plans to display the creche. The city decided to add several secular symbols of the Christmas holiday to its display in order to conform the display to the requirements of the Establishment Clause.

**No More Gideons Bible Distributions at Elementary School, Thanks to AU - December 2004, Oxford, MS:** An Oxford parent contacted AU concerning the distribution of Bibles by the Gideon Bible Society to fifth-grade students at his son's elementary school. We wrote to the principal and school-district superintendent explaining that allowing outsiders to enter an elementary school to distribute religious materials to students is unconstitutional, and requesting that the school district ensure that such distributions do not occur in the future. The superintendent stated that he would issue a directive to school-district staff to inform them that such distributions violate school-district policy.

**Mayor-Elect's Attempt to Turn Inauguration Into a Church Service Blocked After AU Letter - December 2004, Cullen, LA:** AU was contacted by a newly elected alderman of the Town of Cullen about the town's inauguration ceremony for the new mayor and members of the board of aldermen. The town had traditionally held a secular inauguration ceremony at the Cullen town hall on New Year's Day. But the 2005 ceremony was instead scheduled to be held in the Holy Temple First Church of God in Christ — the church of the newly elected mayor — and was set to include gospel music, prayers, and readings from scriptures. We wrote to the outgoing mayor and aldermen, explaining that the planned ceremony was blatantly unconstitutional and requesting that they change the venue for the ceremony and remove the sectarian religious elements from the program. Our complainant subsequently informed us that the ceremony was moved back to the Cullen Town Hall and that the religious elements were omitted.

**AU Letter Ends Sectarian Prayers by City Council - December 2004, Lockhart, TX:** AU received a complaint from a local resident that the Lockhart City Council often offered sectarian invocations before its meetings. We wrote to the council and the city's attorney to inform them that sectarian prayers are impermissible before deliberative bodies, and that, although nonsectarian prayers are permissible, it would be advisable to eschew prayers altogether in order to respect the beliefs of all city residents. We heard from our complainant that, at the next council meeting, one of the Council members gave a nonsectarian invocation, mentioned our letter, and stated that the council's policy should be to avoid sectarian references in its invocations. The complainant is keeping us updated on whether the other council members follow suit as the invocation is given by the various council members on a rotating basis.

**Salvation Army Kettle Disappears From Public Elementary School After AU Letter - December 2004, Tuscaloosa, AL:** A Tuscaloosa parent contacted us about an annual Salvation Army kettle drive that his daughter's elementary school sponsored. The parent had raised Establishment Clause concerns with school officials in the past and, in

2002, had persuaded the school principal to cancel the drive. But the school reinstated the drive the following year, holding it off school grounds and claiming that the student council had chosen the Salvation Army as the charity it wanted to support. AU wrote to the school district, explaining that any school sponsorship of the kettle drive violates the Establishment Clause and that the school cannot disavow that sponsorship by putting responsibility for the program on the student council's shoulders. Our complainant has informed us that, on the school day immediately following the district's receipt of our letter, the kettles disappeared and have not returned. We sent a letter to school officials in November 2005 seeking to ensure that they would not allow the Salvation Army to resume kettle drives at any Tuscaloosa City schools during the 2005 winter-holiday season. According to our complainant, no kettle drives took place at Tuscaloosa City schools in December 2005.

**Bible Class is Cancelled and Principal No Longer Proselytizes Staff, Thanks to AU - October 2004, Boca Raton, FL:** We wrote a letter to the Palm Beach County School District superintendent and school-board chair after learning that (a) the Palm Beach County School Board was considering a proposal to add a Bible class to the school curriculum and (b) the principal of Boca Raton High School had made comments regarding his religious beliefs at a school staff meeting. We notified the superintendent and school-board chair that both the Bible class and the principal's comments were troubling from an Establishment Clause standpoint and that the school district should ensure that the high-school curriculum and the principal's conduct satisfy the requirements of the Constitution. We received a letter from the school board's attorney informing us that the school district will not offer a Bible class and that the principal has agreed to abide by the district's requirement that he not use his official position to advance religion.

**AU Ends a Quarter-Century of Sectarian City Council Prayers - October 2004, Baker City, OR:** We received a complaint that the prayers typically delivered before Baker City Council meetings are often highly sectarian. We wrote to the city-council members to inform them that prayers with exclusively Christian language are constitutionally improper. We asked the city council to take steps to ensure that any future prayers are nonsectarian. We subsequently heard from our complainant that, at the next city-council meeting, council members mentioned our letter and delivered a nonsectarian invocation. Then, after a new council took office in January 2005, the body met without delivering any invocation — for the first time in 24 years. The city attorney informed our complainant that the town's mayor wanted to see the issue go away quietly.

**AU Lays Down the Law on City Council Prayers - October 2004, West Milford, NJ:** We received a complaint that the prayers typically delivered before West Milford Council meetings are often sectarian. We wrote to the city-council members to inform them that exclusively Christian language is constitutionally improper, and we asked the council to take steps to ensure that future prayers are nonsectarian. An article appeared in the local newspaper that liberally quoted our letter as setting forth the correct legal standards governing prayer before city-council meetings. The article reported that those rules will be followed as West Milford town policy from now on. A letter from the township administrator later confirmed that future prayers will employ ecumenical rather than sectarian language.

**School District Agrees to Scrutinize Future Events After AU Reveals Religious Promotion at High School Assembly - October 2004, Albuquerque, NM:** We received a complaint that a Christian group called Mike Hagen's Strength Team performed at an assembly at the Eisenhower Middle School; that the Strength Team group encouraged students to attend a Christian revival at a local church; and that school officials distributed tickets to the revival. We wrote to inform school-district officials that the Albuquerque Public Schools' actions in this matter were unconstitutional, and we asked that they take steps to ensure that school assemblies are not used as vehicles for outside groups to access students for proselytization. The school district assured us that it had been unaware of the group's religious message and that future performances will be more carefully scrutinized.

**AU-Proposed Policy Replaces Prison's Preferential Treatment of Religious Literature - October 2004, Edgefield, SC:** An inmate in the federal penitentiary in Edgefield informed us that the warden of the facility had issued a memorandum permitting inmates to place a copy of the Bible or Koran on top of their inmate lockers, but forbidding the inmates from placing any other book in that spot. We wrote a letter to the director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the director of the Bureau's Southeast Regional Office, and the warden of the Edgefield prison explaining that the limitation violated the U.S. Constitution because it gave inmates special privileges based upon their religious practice. We asked the Bureau either to allow inmates to place a book of their choosing on top of their lockers, or else to ban inmates from placing any items on top of their lockers. The regional director responded with a letter stating that "the issue was reevaluated and the warden has taken the appropriate action." The inmate complainant then sent us a copy of the warden's new policy, which permits inmates to place one book of their choice on top of their lockers.

**AU Calls Curtains on School-Sponsored Student Production of Religious Play - October 2004, Texarkana, TX:** AU received a complaint from a Pleasant Grove High School student who reported that his high school was sponsoring a student production of the play Cotton Patch Gospel, which presents the story of Jesus — as described in the New Testament's Gospels of Matthew and John — set in the present-day South. We wrote to the school superintendent, school board president, and principal, informing them that the school's sponsorship of the play constituted an unconstitutional endorsement of the play's religious message and advising them to cancel the play. The school board's attorney responded with a letter informing us that the play was canceled.

**Principal's Refusal to Allow Atheist Group Gets Failing Grade from Superintendent After AU Letter - September 2004, Thibodaux, LA:** A Lafourche Parish Public Schools student reported that the principal of his high school had refused to allow him to start an atheist/non-theist club. According to the complainant, the principal permitted other extra-curricular clubs — including the Christian Club and a Fellowship of Christian Athletes group — to use school facilities. We wrote a letter to the school district superintendent in which we explained that the principal's refusal to permit the formation of an atheist club violated the Equal Access Act. We asked the superintendent to ensure that the atheist/non-theist club receives all of the opportunities and privileges granted to other student clubs. We received a letter from the superintendent acknowledging the right of students to form an atheist club.

**AU Gives New Citizen the Opportunity to Swear a Secular Oath - July 2004, Miami, FL:** During his citizenship interview, a soon-to-be-naturalized legal resident was forced to swear an oath concluding “so help me God.” Initially, he objected to the religious language in the oath, but he was told by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly the INS) interviewers that if he objected, he would have to complete a supplemental questionnaire and return to the immigration office sixty days later for a second interview. In order to avoid this delay and vote in the November elections, our complainant agreed to swear the religious oath. After hearing of the incident, AU contacted the USCIS to explain that the United States Constitution and federal regulations require that objecting citizens be able to swear a secular oath, without either penalty or delay. AU asked USCIS to modify its current forms to reflect the availability of a secular oath and to ensure that this situation will not occur again. A USCIS official contacted AU to inform us that our complainant would be given the opportunity to return to the Miami Citizenship Office to swear a secular oath.

**School Apologizes to Parent for Assistant Principal’s Graduation Prayer, Thanks to AU - June 2004, Decatur, GA:** A concerned parent informed AU that an assistant principal at the Fernbank Elementary School had delivered a prayer at her child’s commencement ceremony. We wrote to the superintendent of the school district and to the school principal, informing them that it is unconstitutional for school officials to pray at public-school functions; we asked them to take appropriate steps to prevent future violations. In response, the district’s assistant superintendent called the complaining parent to apologize. The official promised that there would be no more prayers in DeKalb County schools, and he provided the parent with a list of steps that the district was taking both to ensure its compliance with the First Amendment and to educate students and their parents about the issue.

**Elementary School Drops Religious Message from Moment of Silence at AU’s Urging - April 2004, The Colony, TX:** The daily practice of Morningside Elementary School was to have a moment of silence broadcast via closed-circuit television, and to have the moment of silence preceded by a school official explaining that students should use the moment of silence to pray to God. AU wrote to the school district, explaining that courts have upheld moments of silence only when they are not adopted for a religious purpose and not used as a religious exercise. AU asked that the school district ensure that future moments of silence do not promote or encourage the practice of prayer. The assistant superintendent for elementary education responded to our letter, explaining that he reviewed our concerns with Morningside’s principal, and assuring us that school personnel will comply with federal law in the future.

**AU Keeps Invitations to Proselytizing Events Out of Future High School Assemblies - March 2004, Belle Vernon, PA:** A Christian Group known as “All Access” conducted a school assembly during school hours at the Belle Vernon Area High School. While the assembly dealt with secular themes of nonviolence and equality, All Access also invited the Belle Vernon students to return to the school auditorium for a second performance of the program, which turned out to include a mock crucifixion, blatant proselytizing, and a request for students to “give their lives to the Lord.” AU wrote to the Belle Vernon Area School District, explaining that school events may not be used to advance religious messages or to recruit students to participate in religious events. The school district agreed, stated that it had not known the second program would be religious,

and informed us that it had already reprimanded All Access for its improper conduct. The school district also confirmed that it would not, in the future, allow groups to advertise or promote religious messages or events during school hours.

**School District Votes to Keep Policy Prohibiting Lunchtime Minister Visits**

**Following AU Warning - February 2004, Shephardsville, KY:** The school district for Bullitt County was reconsidering its policy of prohibiting religious ministers from coming on school campuses to have lunch with students. AU wrote a letter advising the district that it had the legal right to establish and enforce a neutral policy denying outsiders access to its schools; and we suggested that retaining such a policy would be advisable. The letter also explained that if the district did end up changing its policy to permit certain religious ministers to come on campus to dine with students, it would have to afford equal access to ministers of all faiths and to non-religious persons. The school district decided to retain its prior policy of denying outsiders access to students.

**School District Overhauls Graduation Ceremony in Response to AU Concerns - February 2004, Akron, OH:**

In June 2003, AU sent a letter to the Manchester Local School District concerning Manchester High School's inclusion of a prayer at its 2003 graduation exercises, the district's sponsorship of a baccalaureate ceremony, and its practice of making attendance at the baccalaureate mandatory for some students. When the High School began making preparations to repeat these practices for the 2004 graduation, we sent a second letter, this time threatening litigation to challenge the school district's conduct. The district responded by making several promises: It would stop using the terms "invocation" and "benediction" to describe school events; it would select graduation speakers on the basis of neutral criteria and permit those speakers to exercise primary control over the content of their speeches; it would cease sponsoring the baccalaureate ceremony; it would take steps to distance itself from that ceremony in order to minimize the appearance of school sponsorship; and it would refrain from requiring any student to attend the ceremony. The district appears to be abiding by those promises: No prayer or other religious speech occurred at the 2004 graduation ceremony.

**Grateful Superintendent Issues New Instructions After AU Informs Him of Teacher's Religious Invitations to Students - February 2004, Stronghurst, IL:**

AU received a complaint that a school teacher at Southern Elementary School had distributed to students an invitation to a biblical parenting class. AU wrote the Stronghurst School Board to explain that the teacher's conduct was unconstitutional. The school board superintendent thanked AU for the letter and said that he would instruct his staff to be on guard against such violations in the future.

**No More Prayers at Faculty Meetings, Thanks to AU - February 2004, McKinney, TX:**

In the fall of 2003, the McKinney Independent School District required new teachers to attend a meeting at McKinney North High School. On behalf of the school district, a minister delivered a prayer at the meeting, using language specific to Christian denominations. AU wrote to the school district, explaining that inclusion of the prayer in the program violated the First Amendment. We demanded that the district refrain from including such prayers in future events. An attorney for the district responded by explaining that the district had not sponsored the new-teacher meeting — although it had indeed made the meeting mandatory for the teachers. The attorney stated that the district would not permit prayer at any future faculty meetings.



**School Board Gives Staff a Lesson on Religious Endorsement In Response to AU Complaint - February 2004, Tamaqua, PA:** Students at Tamaqua Elementary School received a class assignment that involved cutting, pasting, and coloring the biblical story of Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus fleeing to Egypt in order to escape from King Herod. The students were directed to reflect on the meaning of the story and on particular passages from the Bible. AU complained to the Tamaqua School Board, asking it not to give religious assignments in public-school classes. Explaining that an errant teacher had assigned the project, the board confirmed that it would remind school staff that such religious endorsements are impermissible.

**School District Rejects Proposed Bible Class After AU Letter - January 2004, Frankenmuth, MI:** Frankenmuth School District was approached by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools to start a class on the Bible as literature. AU wrote to the school district, explaining that such a class would likely be unconstitutional, especially in light of the curriculum promulgated by the National Council, which attempts to promote the Bible's spiritual aspects rather than its literary ones. We learned in January 2005 that the school board voted against adding the class.

**Mandatory Prayers Eliminated from College Football Program After AU Letter - January 2004, Wichita Falls, TX:** Jerry Royal, chaplain for the Midwestern State University football team, held mandatory team "chapels." These prayer meetings were held before regular team meetings every Friday night of the 2003 football season. AU wrote to the university to explain that the prayer meetings constituted illegal incorporation of religion into the football program, and we asked university officials to discontinue them. In October 2004, we heard from our complainant that all religious practices other than student-initiated ones have been eliminated from the football program for the 2004 season.

**School Board's Plan to Teach "Intelligent Design" Thwarted Following AU's Strenuous Objection - January 2004, Darby, MT:** Upon learning that the Darby School District was considering a proposal to teach "intelligent design" in science classrooms, AU wrote to the school district, strenuously encouraging the school board to reject the proposal on the ground that intelligent design is a religious theory, akin to creationism, that cannot be promoted in public schools. A subsequent school-board election resulted in two pro-creationism members being replaced by two pro-evolution members, thereby thwarting the agenda of the board member who had sought to incorporate intelligent design into the curriculum.

## 2003

**Muslim Student Succeeds in Challenging Public School's Head-Scarf Prohibition, with AU's Support - December 2003, Muskogee, OK:** Nashala Hearn received repeated suspensions for violating the Muskogee Public Schools' dress code by wearing a hijab — i.e., a Muslim head-scarf. Hearn, represented by the Rutherford Institute, filed suit to challenge enforcement of the dress code. AU wrote a letter supporting Hearn's position in a settlement conference. The school district refused to compromise, but Hearn ultimately won her lawsuit.

**School Board Concedes to AU on Creationist Curriculum - November 2003, Cody, WY:** The Cody Public Schools adopted a new religion policy. While most of the policy was in line with constitutional ideals, one part of the policy stated that the schools could teach creationism as long as scientific theories were taught alongside it. AU wrote the School District, explaining that creationism was altogether prohibited from being taught in public school science classes, even if scientific theories were being taught. The district conceded our position.

**AU Obtains Principal's Assurance in Stopping Seventh Grade Creationist Lessons - November 2003, Shaker Heights, OH:** AU learned that a teacher at Shaker Heights Middle School had been teaching creationism in a seventh-grade geography class. AU sent a letter to school officials informing them that teaching creationism is unconstitutional, and requesting that they stop the teacher from continuing his religious advocacy in the classroom. The principal of the school called and assured us that the situation would be resolved.

**School Official No Longer Encouraged to Attend Religious Presentations After Superintendent Admits Impropriety to AU - November 2003, Winston-Salem, NC:** Superintendent Don Martin encouraged Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school officials to attend a presentation by Joanne Highley, one of the founders of the Living in Freedom Eternally (L.I.F.E.) Ministry. This explicitly Christian organization promotes the view that homosexuality is a sin and that gays and lesbians can be converted to heterosexuality through conversion to Christianity. AU wrote to Superintendent Martin to inform him that it is unconstitutional for him to use his public position to encourage staff to attend religious events and asked that he refrain from doing so in the future. We received a letter from the Superintendent acknowledging that the presentation was inappropriate for the purpose of educating staff about the problems gay and lesbian students face (his intention in extending the invitation) and that he did not intend to encourage staff to attend such presentations in the future.

**Church Follows AU Advice and Rejects Arrangement with County - November 2003, West Columbia, SC:** Kittiwake Baptist Church was considering an arrangement with the County of Lexington under which the Church would receive roughly twenty-thousand dollars (\$20,000) worth of work toward its new building and, in exchange, would give the County access to the building's bathrooms during the County's soccer practices. Church leaders asked AU for its opinion regarding the constitutionality of the arrangement. AU politely explained that while religious entities can contract with the government, such an apparently unequal deal would smack of religious favoritism and raise real constitutional concerns. AU advised Kittiwake either to modify the deal to make it more commensurate or to decline to enter into the arrangement. The Church chose the latter course.

**AU Letter Means No More Town "Favors" for Church Parking Lots - November 2003, Bergen, NY:** AU received a complaint from a resident of Bergen who reported that the town highway crew, under the direction of the Town Highway Superintendent, paves the parking lots of some local churches using town crews and equipment. According to our complainant, the town does this as a "favor" to the Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic churches. We wrote to the Mayor, Town Supervisor, and Highway Superintendent to inform them that limiting these services to churches is unconstitutional and, in the event

that the town provides such services to others, asking for information about policies and practices on this issue. We received a letter from the Town of Bergen stating that the services had been provided to community organizations in addition to churches, but that nevertheless the Town had decided to discontinue the services.

**Principal Registers Complaint with Comedy Duo After AU Reveals Religious Proselytization at School-Sponsored Assembly - November 2003, St. Clair Shores, MI:** AU learned that a mandatory assembly occurred at Lakeview High School on September 18, 2003 featuring a comedy duo called “Mad Dogs and Englishmen,” an evangelistic group that uses humor and persuasive speaking in public-school presentations to invite students to a subsequent church event. The performers publicized the subsequent event both from the stage and by having flyers passed out at the presentation. We wrote to school officials to inform them that although a religious group may deliver a secular message at a school assembly, the school must ensure that: (1) the presentation has no religious content; (2) the presenters do not use the school assembly as a forum for orally advertising a later religious event; and (3) no religious materials of any kind, including flyers advertising parties or other events at local churches, are distributed by performers, students, or school officials. We received a letter from the school Principal explaining that he was surprised and disappointed by the content of the performance and had registered a complaint with Mad Dogs and Englishmen.

**State Senate Commission Heeds AU Advice on Legislative Prayer Policy - November 2003, Annapolis, MD:** AU learned that the Maryland Senate was reviewing its practice of inviting clergy to recite a prayer at the beginning of its legislative sessions. In a letter to the Senate Special Commission on Legislative Prayer, we explained that although the U.S. Supreme Court had upheld legislative prayers under certain circumstances, such prayers are constitutional only if the legislature (a) shows no favoritism toward majoritarian religious traditions, (b) makes attendance optional, and (c) ensures that the prayers are nonsectarian. We further explained that there were good policy reasons for the Maryland Senate simply to discontinue the prayers. Although the legislature retained the prayers, the Special Commission did advise it to prohibit clergy from offering prayers that are specific to a single religious tradition, and to schedule the prayers before rather than after taking attendance by calling the roll— thus affording legislators the opportunity to skip the prayers without suffering any adverse consequences.

**City Council Assures Diversity in Opening Prayers After AU Letter - September 2003, Orlando, FL:** AU wrote to Orlando officials after learning that the City Clerk’s office invites members of the community to offer prayers before regular City Council meetings, and that the prayers are often sectarian. We warned officials of the unconstitutionality of the City’s current practice, and asked that the Council either cease including prayers at its meetings or ensure that 1) all faith groups are allowed to participate and 2) the prayers are non-sectarian. We received a letter from the City informing us that invocations are given by individuals of diverse religions, such as Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, in addition to Christianity, and that the City sends each person scheduled to give a prayer a letter asking that the prayer-giver respect the diversity of the community and refrain from any references to a specific religion.

**School Board Puts Off Plans to “Teach the Debate” on Evolution Following AU Warning - August 2003, Roseville, CA:** After approving textbooks for the District’s

biology classes, the School Board of the Roseville Joint Union High School District said it would consider including supplemental materials to “teach the debate” between religious and scientific teachings on evolution. We wrote to inform Board members that they are constitutionally obligated to reject any supplemental teachings that promote a religious alternative to evolution. The Board did not adopt the supplemental materials and instead referred the matter to a committee to gather input from the District’s teachers.

**School District Abandons Plan for High School Chaplains After AU Advice - August 2003, Tracy, CA:** Our chapter leader in Sacramento made us aware that the Tracy Unified School District’s planned to initiate a chaplain program in one of its high schools that would exclusively use volunteer ministers to counsel students. AU advised District officials that the program was unconstitutional and asked that the Board reject the plan. At its August meeting the Board decided against the proposal.

**Correctional Facility Clarifies Its Role in Religious Conference in Response to AU’s Letter - July 2003, Marion, OH:** Upon learning that the Marion Correctional Facility was planning to host the first live Promise Keepers conference from within a correctional facility. According to materials describing the event, it appeared that the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (“ODRC”), and the Marion Correctional Facility were sponsoring the conference. For example, the ODRC Religious Services Coordinator, stated in a letter that he was “pleased to announce a historic event that the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is sponsoring.” We wrote to the Director of the ODRC to inform him that sponsorship of this type of sectarian event by a government entity is unconstitutional. He responded to our letter by clarifying that ODRC was not sponsoring the event and that no state monies were spent on it. Additionally, he issued a correction memo to ensure that the recipients of the original letter from the Religious Services Coordinator were aware that ODRC was not sponsoring the event.

**Public High School Stops Organizing Baccalaureate Service on AU’s Advice - June 2003, Grapevine, TX:** Upon learning that Colleyville Heritage High School officials helped plan and organize a baccalaureate service, advertised the service in the school’s graduation invitations, and spoke at the service, AU informed school officials that the school’s conduct was unconstitutional. We asked officials to discontinue these activities in the future, so as to avoid legal action. In a letter dated August 18, 2003, the district informed us that it would no longer be affiliated with any baccalaureate service. On September 23, 2003, the Dallas Morning News published an article stating definitively that the district had abandoned plans to hold the ceremony in 2004.

**AU Blocks Proposal to Teach Intelligent Design in Public-School Science Classes - Santa Fe, NM:** Intelligent design proponents sought to influence the New Mexico Department of Education to revise the state’s public school science standards to incorporate teaching about alternatives to evolution. We wrote to state officials to inform them that incorporating language that calls for the teaching of intelligent design would run afoul of the U.S. Constitution. In August of 2003 we learned that the State Board of Education did not accept any of the proposals of the pro-intelligent design group, and the National Center for Science Education regards the adopted standards as knowledgeable, well-organized and well-integrated.

**Public Middle School Will Not Allow Distribution of Bibles Following AU Letter - June 2003, Springville, IA:** AU learned that members of the Gideon Bible Society stood between school buses and distributed Bibles to students on the school sidewalk at Springville Middle School. We advised the officials that this practice was unconstitutional and asked that they not permit such distributions in the future. After receiving our letter, the District Superintendent criticized the actions of the school's Principal in facilitating the distribution, and indicated that he will not permit similar actions in the future and that the District will revise its written policies to make this plain.

**Federal Program Eliminates Preference for Religious Organizations at AU's Request - May 2003, Washington, DC:** The Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") issued a Super Notice of Funding Availability for HUD's Discretionary Programs ("SuperNOFA"). The SuperNOFA contained language that created preferences for faith-based community organizations over secular community organizations. We sent a demand letter to HUD Secretary Mel Martinez, requesting that HUD eliminate the preferential language. HUD agreed to do so, and issued a correction to the SuperNOFA that eliminated the problematic language on June 17, 2003.

**Moment of Silence Replaces Prayer at High School Graduation Ceremony Following AU's Letter - May 2003, Rock Hill, SC:** On a Friday afternoon, a student at Northwestern High School informed AU that, during that morning's graduation rehearsal, the school principal had asked seniors to "vote on whether or not they want prayer." We immediately contacted school officials and informed them that the invocation that was planned for the ceremony that evening was unconstitutional; we asked that the planned prayer be removed. The school complied with our request and instead observed a moment of silence.

**At AU's Urging, High School Officials Stop Participating in Baccalaureate Services and Delivering Prayers at Award Ceremonies - May 2003, Rock Hill, SC:** The same student who informed us of Northwestern High School's plan to include a prayer as part of graduation exercises (see above entry) also told us that school officials had (1) coerced students into attending baccalaureate ceremonies, (2) actively participated in the baccalaureates, and (3) included invocations in awards ceremonies. We asked the school district to discontinue these practices, and repeated the requests in a follow-up letter. The school district's attorney responded, stating that the school had changed its policies in order to address our concerns. We then requested a copy of the amended policies, and received a letter stating both that school officials will no longer participate in baccalaureate services and that award ceremonies will no longer include prayers or other religious activities.

**AU Acts on Soldier's Complaint, Secures Guarantee that Army Chaplain Will Not Coerce Soldiers to Participate in Christian Services - April 2003, Washington, DC:** AU received reports that Army Chaplain Josh Llano, based in Iraq, was conditioning American soldiers' access to water and food on sermon attendance and participation in Christian baptisms. We wrote to Army officials to explain that Chaplain Llano's policies were grossly unconstitutional and asked for immediate action. The Army Chief of Chaplains responded with a guarantee that Chaplain Llano will not use coercive methods in the future.

**Army Reduces Involvement in Christian Gathering in Response to AU Letter - April 2003, Fort Bragg, NC:** AU wrote to Army officials after learning that Major General William Boykin was planning to host and participate in a “FAITH Force Multipliers Meeting” for evangelical Christian ministers at Fort Bragg. The event featured an overnight stay on the military base, a speech by Boykin, and access to locations on base and special demonstrations of combat technique that other civilians could not receive. We informed the Army that the event as planned was unconstitutional. After receiving our letter, Fort Bragg officials explained that the meeting would be scaled back, the group would not be allowed to spend the night on base, and Boykin’s role would be limited to greeting the ministers.

**AU Successfully Counters Proposal to Teach Bible Course in Public High School - April 2003, Paradise, CA:** Upon being informed that the Paradise Unified School District Board of Trustees was being asked to add a high school class on the Bible as History and Literature, we wrote school officials to inform them of the constitutional difficulties with such courses. We urged the Board to reject the request. On Tuesday, May 20, the Board unanimously voted down the proposed course. See also April 2004 Resolved entry.

**State College Cuts Benedictions from Commencement Ceremonies on AU’s Advice - February 2003, Joplin, MO:** AU contacted officials of Missouri Southern State College after learning that sectarian benedictions are a regular feature at the school’s commencement ceremonies. We informed them of the unconstitutionality of the prayers and asked that they be discontinued for future graduations. Counsel for the School District responded by letter to inform us that all future graduation speakers will comply with the decisions we cited concerning prayer at university graduations.

**State University Basketball Program Abandons Pre-Game Prayers and Hiring Discrimination After AU Complaint - February 2003, Manhattan, KS:** AU received complaints about the incorporation of religion into Kansas State University’s women’s basketball program. We wrote to school officials and informed them that it is unconstitutional for the basketball coach to pray with team members before games, for the school to engage in religious discrimination in the hiring of assistant coaches, and for the team to utilize an official team chaplain. We asked that school officials cure these violations. Counsel for the University responded that the practices we outlined will be discontinued and assured us that the University has not and will not discriminate based on religion in its hiring practices.

## 2002

**City Council Takes AU’s Advice, Rejects Ten Commandments Display - December 2002, Crestview, FL:** AU wrote to the Crestview City Council after learning that citizens had passed a referendum allowing the Council to display the Ten Commandments on city property and authorizing the use of city funds to defend the display against legal challenge. We advised the Council of the unconstitutionality of such a display and warned of the high costs associated with litigation. In January, we learned that the Council voted against posting the Commandments in City Hall.

**School Officials Instructed to Block Distribution of Bibles After AU Complains - December 2002, Norfolk, VA:** Upon learning that members of the Gideon Bible Society stood beside school bus doors and distributed copies of the New Testament to students at Blair Middle School, AU contacted officials of the Norfolk Public Schools. We advised the officials that this practice was unconstitutional and asked that they not permit such distributions in the future. In January of 2003, counsel for the City contacted our office and indicated that he would contact both the Gideon groups operating in Norfolk and the school officials and instruct them that the Bible distribution practice was unconstitutional and should not occur in the future. We will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that similar distributions do not occur.

**AU Gains Access to Public Library's Community Room on Equal Basis with Other Non-Profits - November 2002, Tarpon Springs, FL:** Despite its longstanding practice of making its "community room" available for meetings of non-profit organizations, the Tarpon Springs Public Library barred AU's Suncoast Chapter from using the room on the ground that the chapter's meetings were not free from "religious and political bias." We sent the city a letter explaining that the library's actions were discriminatory and violated the First Amendment. The city agreed to allow the Suncoast Chapter to resume using the room temporarily; but it also decided that, beginning in September 2003, it would bar all organizations from using the room unless their meetings were sponsored by the library. We later learned that the city was continuing to discriminate against groups such as AU by withholding sponsorship (and hence denying use of the room), while at the same time declaring the library to be a sponsor of other private non-profit groups (thereby allowing those groups to continue using the facility as they always had before). Accordingly, we sent a letter explaining that the city's new tactic was also unconstitutionally discriminatory. In August 2003, the city commissioners voted to allow all non-profit groups to use the room, regardless of their political, religious, or other affiliations. And although the community room was to be closed and converted into a children's reading room beginning in June 2004, the city also decided to permit non-profit groups to hold their meetings in a different room in the library.

**Public High School Removes Portrait of Jesus After Receiving Letter from AU - September 2002, Cookeville, TN:** Upperman High School had a portrait of Jesus displayed in the front hallway of the school, adjacent to the school office. AU wrote to officials of the Putnam County School District informing them that the display is grossly unconstitutional, and requesting that it be removed. After receiving our letter, school officials removed the portrait.

**AU Ends Promotion of Church Program at Public Elementary School - August 2002, Lindsborg, KS:** AU wrote to officials in the Smoky Valley Public Schools after we received a complaint that Soderstrom Elementary School was allowing the Associated Churches of Lindsborg to come onto school property to promote their release time program. We were also informed that school personnel were distributing permission slips for the program. We asked that the school refrain from both practices in the future. In response, the School District changed its policies, and agreed to prohibit teachers from distributing permission slips and to limit the program's access to that which is given to other community organizations.

**AU Convinces Navy Youth Recreation Program to Eliminate Statement of Religious Belief - August 2002, Pearl Harbor, HI:** AU wrote to the Commander of the Navy Region Hawaii after learning that the Navy had turned over administration of its youth recreation program to the Boys and Girls Club, which requires all participants to sign membership cards containing a code, one element of which is the statement “I believe in God.” Thereafter, we were informed by counsel for the Navy Region that cards given to participating children in the future will not include the Code, and that new cards will be issued to those children who already hold a card bearing the Code.

**AU Letter Leads Federal Grant Program to Lift Religious Criteria - August 2002, Washington, DC:** The Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, announced a grant program relating to HIV/AIDS prevention and response in Zimbabwe. The announcement reserved some of the program funds exclusively for faith-based organizations. We sent a letter to the CDC informing them that using religion-related criteria to select grant recipients violates the U.S. Constitution. On September 27, 2002, the Director of the CDC sent us a letter informing us that the CDC will not fund any grant applicants based on the grant announcement, and that, in the future, applicants for the grant program will be evaluated on neutral criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion.

**Town Will Not Transfer Property to Church, Thanks to AU - July 2002, Chili, NY:** AU wrote to officials in Chili after we learned that the Town Board passed a resolution authorizing the town to enter into a purchase agreement with a local church that would result in the transfer of town-owned property to the church at little or no cost. We asked the town to rescind the resolution and to decline to enter into a purchase agreement. The town’s supervisor originally responded by letter and assured us that the purchase agreement will require payment of an amount greater than the property’s assessed value. However, in February 2003, AU learned that the town decided against transferring the property.

**Superintendent Agrees with AU, Halts Distribution of Bibles at Public Schools - June 2002, Deerfield, MI:** AU wrote to officials with the Deerfield Public Schools to take issue with the District’s practice of allowing members of the Gideons to distribute Bibles to students. Upon receipt of our letter, the Superintendent admitted that the District had made a mistake in allowing the distribution and guaranteed that it would not occur again.

**School Board Adopts AU’s Recommendation, Rejects Proposal to Teach Creationism in Public High School Science Classes - June 2002, Greensburg, PA:** AU wrote to the Greensburg Salem School Board to urge it to reject a proposal to teach creation science, alongside evolution, in its high school science classes. The Superintendent responded by explaining that the District would not approve the proposal.

**School Board Stops Offering Prayers Before Meetings After AU Warning - June 2002, Paradise, CA:** AU wrote to the School Board of Paradise Unified School District to urge it to change its current practice of offering a prayer before Board meetings. After receiving our letter, the Board voted to discontinue the prayers.

**AU Convinces Department of Transportation to Make Memorial Secular - May 2002, Harrisburg, PA:** AU wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Transportation to



inform him that a DOT-sponsored memorial, consisting of seventy-six white crosses, was unconstitutional. The memorial, which commemorates DOT workers killed in workplace accidents, was created by Department employees and was displayed on government property. After receiving our letter, the DOT's chief counsel informed us that the Department would modify the memorial by removing the crosses and replacing them with hard hats.

**AU Prevents Public High School from Including Prayers at Graduation Ceremony - May 2002, Sulphur, LA:** AU wrote to school district officials in Calcasieu Parish after we were contacted by a student who informed us that an opening and closing prayer would be included at Sulphur High School's upcoming graduation. The school had held "tryouts" at which faculty members chose the students who would give the prayers. After receiving our letter, the School Board's attorney instructed the Principal and the Superintendent to remove both prayers from this year's ceremony.

**State Revokes School's Charter After AU Documents Violations - May 2002, Austin, TX:** AU learned that the Texas Commissioner of Education decided to revoke the charter of Prepared Table Charter School in Houston. We wrote to the Administrative Law Judge who will be hearing the appeal from the Commissioner's decision and asked that he affirm the revocation. We explained that the continued operations and funding of the school would raise constitutional concerns because the name of the school has religious connotations, the school operates on the premises of a church, the CEO of the charter school is the pastor of the church, and the school has used state funds to make improvements to church property and has funneled state funds to the church's coffers. On August 16, 2001, the Judge affirmed the state's decision to revoke the charter.

**Federal Grant Program Prohibits Religious Activities and Discrimination to Resolve AU Complaint - May 2002, Washington, DC:** The Department of Labor ("DOL") concurrently issued three grant announcements relating to faith-based and community-based organizations: the first providing grants to states, the second providing grants to intermediaries, and the third providing grants directly to faith-based and community-based organizations. The first two announcements each disallowed the use of grants for religious instruction or activity and discrimination in hiring on the basis of religion. The third announcement, concerning direct grants, omitted this language. After we sent a letter to the DOL complaining about the omission, the DOL promptly amended the third announcement to include this language.

**AU Ensures that Rally Will Be Secular - May 2002, Pensacola, FL:** AU wrote to the Escambia County School Board to urge it to refrain from facilitating the presentation of an event titled the "Ultimate PEP Rally," which is sponsored by "Athletes in Action," an unabashedly and explicitly Christian group. Promotional material for the Rally stated that one of its purposes was to promote "faith," and the keynote speaker was quoted as saying that a "spiritual awakening" is the answer to school violence. Athletes in Action and a local church asked the School Board to release students from school to attend the Rally and to provide students with transportation to the event. After receiving our letter, the Board voted against supporting the Rally. In response to community pressure, however, the Board reversed its decision. We wrote a follow-up letter reiterating our concerns, and asking that the Board take steps to ensure that the Ultimate PEP Rally is wholly secular. Thereafter, a Board member informed us that the Superintendent and the School Board

have each appointed a representative to work with organizers of the Rally to ensure that the event complies with the Constitution.

**School Board Accepts AU's Advice, Rejects Proposal to Teach Creationism - April 2002, Joes, CO:** AU wrote to the Liberty School District's Board of Education to request that it vote against a proposed policy that would require the "balanced treatment" of evolution and creation science in every educational program "that deals with the origin of man, life, the earth or the universe." The Board subsequently unanimously voted against the proposed policy.

**AU Blocks County from Displaying Ten Commandments in Government Buildings - March 2002, Lebanon, TN:** AU learned that the Wilson County Commission recently approved a resolution supporting the display of the Ten Commandments in government buildings. We wrote to the Commission to ask that it refrain from erecting such displays. To date, the Commission has not placed any Ten Commandments displays in county buildings.

**Elementary School Will Not Announce Prayer Meetings over Loudspeaker Following AU Letter - March 2002, Grove City, OH:** We received a complaint that an elementary school allowed a school employee to use the public address system on a daily basis to announce a faculty-staff prayer meeting held before the start of the school day. We wrote to the Principal and Superintendent to request that they take steps to end these announcements. The Superintendent informed us that he had instructed the school to end the practice.

**AU Secures Guarantee that Middle School Chorus Will Limit Performances of Christian Music - March 2002, Zeeland, MI:** AU wrote to officials in the Zeeland Public School District after we received a complaint that a middle school chorus practiced and performed primarily Christian music. We asked that the chorus' song list be revised to reflect a more balanced array of songs. The Principal assured us that only a fraction of the songs performed by the choir would be religious in nature, and that the choir teacher permits students who object to religious songs to be excused from singing them.

**AU Averts Display of Ten Commandments in High School - March 2002, Kerrville, TX:** AU wrote to the Board of Trustees of the Kerrville Independent School District to urge members to vote against a proposal to post the Ten Commandments in a local high school. The Trustees subsequently decided not to consider the proposal.

**Board of Education Excludes Intelligent Design from Science Standards At AU's Urging - February 2002, Columbus, OH:** AU learned that Ohio's State Board of Education was considering modifying Ohio's statewide science education standards to impede the teaching of evolution and require the teaching of "intelligent design," which is a weakly disguised form of creationism. We wrote to the Board of Education and urged them not to make the proposed changes, cautioning the Board that adoption of the proposed changes could cause us to file suit. On December 10, 2002, the Board of Education unanimously approved standards that did not incorporate the changes recommended by intelligent design proponents. In addition, the Board added an explicit statement that the standards do not mandate the teaching of or testing of intelligent design.

**School Board Cancels Creationism Presentation in Response to AU's Letter - February 2002, Waynesburg, PA:** AU learned that the West Greene School Board voted to allow a nationally-known advocate of creation science to give a presentation to students in the District. We wrote to the School Board requesting that it refrain from allowing the presentation. The School Board subsequently voted to cancel the talk.

**County Decides Against Ten Commandments Display in Courthouse After AU's Letter - February 2002, Bayboro, NC:** We wrote to the Pamlico County Board of Commissioners to urge it to reject a proposal to post the Ten Commandments in the Bayboro Courthouse. After receiving our letter, the Board tabled the issue.

**AU Prevents Ten Commandments Display in Public Schools - February 2002, New Bern, NC:** AU wrote to the Craven County School Board to urge members to vote against a proposal to post the Ten Commandments in public schools. We learned that the Board subsequently tabled the proposal. We will continue to monitor the situation.

**Federal Grant Program Opens Funds to Non-Religious Organizations Because of AU Complaint - February 2002, Washington, DC:** In January 2002, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS"), issued a program announcement that set aside \$210,000 in grant money to fund or promote collaborations between faith-based organizations and community action agencies. On February 4, 2002, we wrote to DHHS to explain that program recipients cannot be defined by reference to religion. DHHS agreed to remedy this problem, and issued an amended announcement converting the grant program into one promoting collaborations between community action agencies and all types of community and charitable service providers.

**State Eliminates Grants for Religious Organizations Upon Receiving AU's Letter - January 2002, Trenton, NJ:** For the past several years, through a "Faith-Based Community Development Initiative," the State of New Jersey has made \$5 million in grant funds available on an annual basis solely to faith-based organizations. On January 8, 2002, we wrote to the Governor of New Jersey, informing him that setting aside grant money for faith-based organizations is unconstitutional and threatening suit. In February 2002, the Governor announced that he intended to eliminate the funding for this grant program for the remainder of the 2002 fiscal year, as New Jersey was facing significant budget problems. It is unclear whether the State will attempt to revive the program in future years. We will continue to monitor the situation.

**School District Tells AU It Will Not Sponsor Football Games That Featured Prayers - January 2002, Largo, FL:** We wrote to the Superintendent of Pinellas County Public Schools to take issue with a proselytizing speech and prayer given by the chaplain of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to high school football players in the locker room before the County All-Star football game. The Superintendent responded to our letter, explaining that the All-Star game was not sponsored by the School District, and that, in the future, the sponsoring organization will make it clear to students and to the community that the game is not a District-sponsored activity.

**School Board Refuses to Place Chaplains in Public Schools After AU Complaint - January 2002, Rochester, NY:** AU learned that members of the Rochester community intended to seek the Board of Education's approval of a proposal to implement an Interfaith

Chaplaincy Program that would place salaried chaplains in the public schools. We wrote to members of the Board of Education to urge them to reject the proposal. To date, the chaplaincy program has not been implemented.

**County Heeds AU's Warning, Scraps Plan to Display Ten Commandments - January 2002, Wentworth, NC:** AU wrote to the Rockingham County Board of Commissioners concerning its decision to erect a display in the County's Government Center consisting of the Ten Commandments, the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence and the state and federal constitutions. After receiving our letter, the Board chose not to post the Ten Commandments.

## 2001

**City Responds to AU's Request By Adding Neutral Symbols to Holiday Display - December 2001, Nutley, NJ:** We wrote to officials in Nutley to request that they take down the town's holiday display, which contained a creche, a menorah and lighted trees and was located on a high school football field. Although the town did not remove the display, it did add a "Happy Holiday" sign, several Nutcracker figures and a row of candy canes to the display, thereby conforming with constitutional standards as enunciated by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

**AU Successfully Advises Against "God Bless America" Posters in Public Schools - December 2001, Naples, FL:** AU wrote to members of the District School Board of Collier County urging them to reject a proposal to place "God Bless America" posters in all schools. Thereafter, the School Board refused to consider the proposal.

**AU Wins Assurances That Religious Leaders Will Lose Role at Public-School Pep Rallies - December 2001, Whitesboro, TX:** AU wrote to officials in the Whitesboro Independent School District in response to a complaint that a Baptist minister was permitted to give a proselytizing speech, followed by a prayer, to students at a high school football pep rally. We requested that the school disallow any religious activity at future school events. The Superintendent contacted us and said that the Principal who allowed the minister to speak to the students had been admonished. He assured us that religious leaders will not be invited to speak to students at future school events. Counsel for the School District contacted us, as well, and assured us that the district intends to fully comply with the First Amendment in the future.

**School District Disavows Religious Activities at High School Basketball Events After AU Complains - November 2001, Knoxville, TN:** We were informed that a high school basketball coach held a mandatory pre-season meeting that included talks from three clergy members, as well as the singing of Christian hymns. We wrote to school officials to request that the school take measures to ensure that the coach would not engage in religious activities with students in the future. The School District's attorney contacted us to clarify that the religious activity had occurred at a game between high school alumni and members of "Crossfire," a religious organization. Current players were invited, but not required, to attend this game. Nevertheless, the School District conceded that the incident had violated the "spirit" of both the Constitution and the Board of Education's policies and

stated that school employees who were involved in the event had been dealt with appropriately.

**In Response to AU's Letter, CDC Clarifies Status of Religious Employee Groups - November 2001, Atlanta, GA:** We wrote to the Associate Director for Program Services at the Centers for Disease Control regarding his department's practice of announcing certain employee groups, including religious groups, as "formally recognized associations." We requested that a disclaimer, stating that the department does not endorse or sponsor employee groups and that attendance at any employee group event is a matter of private choice, be attached to future memoranda. A disclaimer is now attached to all announcements.

**School Board Takes AU's Advice, Votes Down Ten Commandments Display - October 2001, Washington, NC:** AU sent a letter to the Chairman of the Beaufort County Board of Education asking that the Board reject a proposal sponsored by the Christian Coalition to post the Ten Commandments in schools. The Board did not approve the proposal.

**AU Ends Distribution of Bibles in Elementary School Cafeteria - October 2001, Johnston County, NC:** AU sent a letter to the Principal of an elementary school and to the Superintendent of the School District to request that the school stop allowing individuals to distribute copies of the New Testament to students in the lunchroom. The Superintendent responded that the practice would end immediately and that the Superintendent and the Board of Education would review their policies. We have asked the complainant to let us know if the distributions resume at any point in the future.

**Mayor Abandons Proselytizing Column Because of AU's Efforts - October 2001, Anadarko, OK:** AU sent a letter to the Mayor and City Attorney to take issue with a column titled "From the Mayor's Desk," which was published in the local paper. The column was written by the Mayor and contained almost exclusively religious and proselytizing messages. The town's attorney informed us that he had spoken with the Mayor and that she had stopped including religious messages in her column.

**Post Office Assures AU It Will Not Allow Prayers at Mandatory Events - October 2001, Woodbridge, VA:** AU received a complaint from a postal employee about the inclusion of a prayer in a special award ceremony at the Woodbridge Post Office, which the employee believed he was required to attend. We wrote to the Postmaster of the branch to inform him that the inclusion of the prayer presented a serious constitutional problem, and we asked that he refrain from such activities at future ceremonies. Counsel for the Post Office responded by letter and stated that the award ceremony was not sponsored by the Post Office; rather, the ceremony was arranged by the local fire and rescue department and was merely held at the Woodbridge branch office. He also assured us that attendance was voluntary and that prayer will not be allowed at any ceremony where employee attendance is mandatory.

**AU Halts Prayers Before High School Football Games - October 2001, New Braunfels, TX:** We wrote to officials in the Comal Independent School District to request that Canyon High School end its practice of allowing a student chaplain to offer a prayer over the public address system before the start of football games. After receiving a second

letter from AU, an attorney for the district contacted us to say that he had issued a directive to the Principal that this practice should not be repeated. The Principal then contacted us himself and indicated that the student chaplain position had been dissolved.

**School Employee Meetings Will Be Free of Prayers, Thanks to AU - October 2001, Houston, TX:** We wrote to officials in the Aldine Independent School District to request that the District stop holding prayers at the beginning of its annual convocation, which all school employees are required to attend. The Superintendent responded that she would try to ensure that future convocations did not include sectarian prayers.

**School Board Refuses Religious Posters upon AU's Recommendation - 2001, Naples, FL:** AU wrote to the District School Board of Collier County to ask it to reject the donation of "In God We Trust" posters from the Christian Coalition for display in public schools. The School Board voted to reject the posters.

**AU Successfully Counters Proposal to Teach Creationism in Public Schools - August 2001, Honolulu, HI:** AU sent a letter to the State Board of Education urging members to reject proposed science standards that would permit the teaching of creationism. The Board unanimously rejected the proposal.

**AU Instructs CDC Not to Designate Funds for Religious Organizations - July 2001, Washington, DC:** AU sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") concerning a Centers for Disease Control ("CDC") grant program entitled "Cooperative Agreements for Human Immunodeficiency Virus Prevention Projects for African American Faith-Based Organizations." This 1999 grant program set aside \$1.5 million for faith-based organizations. We informed DHHS that such set-asides for religious entities are unconstitutional. In telephone conversations, the director of the CDC assured us that CDC would not create any such faith-based set-aside programs in the future. The CDC director also explained that, while the recipients of the 1999 funding are annually eligible for renewal of their grants through the 2002-2003 fiscal year, whether such renewal is given is based solely on the grant recipients' performance in utilizing the grant money.

**AU Warning Leads Federal Agency to Eliminate Funding Preference for Religious Organizations - May 2001, Washington, DC:** AU sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS"), threatening a legal challenge against a \$4 million Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant program entitled "Cooperative Agreements for Faith-Based and Youth Serving Community Organizations to Integrate Substance Abuse Prevention and HIV Prevention for Youth." Only faith-based organizations and organizations working in collaboration with faith-based organizations were eligible for funding under this grant program. The day after receiving our letter, DHHS agreed to open the grant program to all organizations and to eliminate the preference for faith-based groups.

**School Officials Agree with AU: Religious Pamphlets and Assembly Violated Policies, Will Not Happen Again - May 2001, Grapevine, TX:** AU wrote a letter to officials of the Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District after the school distributed religious pamphlets created by evangelist Al Denson. Al Denson was scheduled to perform for the sixth grade students, but his assembly was cancelled due to rain. We explained that the distribution of the pamphlets was unconstitutional and that the

assembly was likely unconstitutional. The law firm for the District wrote to us and explained that the distribution occurred in violation of District guidelines and that the school administration has taken steps to prevent a recurrence of the incident.

**School Board Complies with AU Demand to Clarify Role in Baccalaureate Service - May 2001, Webster Groves, MO:** AU wrote to officials of the Webster Groves School District to ask them to disassociate the school and the School Board from the community-run baccalaureate service scheduled to be held in the high school auditorium. The Attorney for the School District informed us that the school required the community-group to send out an additional mailer to senior class students that would explain that the event was not school-sponsored. He assured us that next year, if there is a baccalaureate on campus, that the original invitation will note that the event is not school-sponsored and that no invitations will be given out in the school.

**AU Convinces High School to Tear Down Chapel - May 2001, Cumberland, KY:** AU wrote to officials of the Harlan County School Board in regard to a chapel that was built in Cumberland High School. The chapel is furnished with two altars, church pews, and religious symbols. The school, however, calls the room the “quiet room,” and characterizes the pews as benches, the altars as podiums, and the crosses as letter “T”s. We explained that the room is unconstitutional, and we asked that the school close the chapel. Johnnie Turner, the attorney for the School Board, wrote a letter dated June 4, 2001, explaining that the room would be renovated into a bathroom before the 2001-2002 school year begins.

**AU Puts an End to Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast - April 2001, Brea, CA:** AU wrote a letter to the Mayor and City Council Members of Brea California to take issue with the Annual Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast. We explained why co-sponsorship of the event was unconstitutional, and urged them to refrain from holding the event in the future. We never received a response from the city but learned from our complainant that the city was again sponsoring the event, scheduled to be held on April 16, 2002. We wrote a second letter to the city explaining a recent lower court decision which held that a city’s sponsorship of a prayer breakfast was unconstitutional. After receiving this letter, the city agreed that in the future it will not sponsor or fund the Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast. The city also agreed that its employees will not help plan the event.

**School District Agrees with AU, Promises End to Distribution of Religious Materials - March 2001, Tecumseh, KS:** AU wrote to officials after the Shawnee Heights Middle School held a mandatory school assembly featuring a religious group known as Team Xtreme. Although the assembly did not contain religious content, the performers distributed a brochure that contained prayers, scripture passages, and invitations to religious activities and church services. We informed them that the distribution was unconstitutional and urged them to disallow similar distributions in the future. The Superintendent replied by letter, telling us that the materials were distributed without the school’s knowledge and that they would prevent similar actions from happening in the future.

**AU Heads Off County Resolution Supporting Ten Commandments Display - March 2001, Toccoa, GA:** We wrote to the Stephens County Commission to urge it to reject a resolution that acknowledged the Ten Commandments as those of Almighty God, and pledged that the Commission would defend the posting of the Ten Commandments. We

informed the Commission that posting the Ten Commandments and passing the resolution were both unconstitutional. The Board voted down the resolution.

**Proposal to Teach Bible Course in Public Schools Withdrawn After AU Letter - January 2001, Woodstock, VA:** AU wrote to the Shenandoah School Board asking it to reject a proposal to adopt the Bible Course created by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public School (NCBCPS). The petitioner for the Bible class subsequently withdrew her petition after deciding that the NCBCPS's curriculum may not be the best choice for Shenandoah County. She indicated her plans to return to the Board in the future to urge it to create its own Bible course. We will continue to monitor the situation.

**School Mascot Will Not Proselytize to Students, District Assures AU - January 2001, Ozark, AR:** AU wrote to officials at Ozark Public Schools to take issue with the school mascot's practice of proselytizing to students. Mr. Darling, a local pastor, plays the mascot, Mr. Hillbilly, and has recently indicated that he uses his position to minister to the students. School officials replied to our letter telling us that although Mr. Darling has made comments that imply that he ministers to the students, he does not. They assured us that Mr. Darling's involvement in the schools does not include religious activities.  
**2000**

**State School Board Takes AU's Advice to Reject Anti-Evolution Teachings - December 2000, Philadelphia, PA:** AU wrote to Pennsylvania Board of Education President James P. Gallagher to urge the rejection of proposed science standards that would allow teachers to present theories in science class that "do or do not support the theory of evolution." We wrote to the School Board again in May 2001, when the School Board was asking for comments and recommendations on the proposed science standards. The School Board has to date not adopted the offending language.

**AU Stops Religious Halftime Shows at Public School - December 2000, Fort Gibson, OK:** We wrote to officials of the Fort Gibson School District 3 to take issue with their halftime show, which consisted of the school's marching band playing four religious songs, marching with religious flags, and forming a cross. The Assistant Superintendent wrote back to tell us that the school has discontinued the show.

**Bible Distributions Barred in Elementary School Following AU Complaint - December 2000, Murfreesboro, TN:** AU wrote to officials of the Rutherford County Schools to ask that they discontinue the practice of allowing the Gideons to set up a table in the lobby of Rockvale Elementary School to distribute Bibles to students in grades K-8. The Principal of the Rockvale Elementary School wrote to tell us that he will no longer allow the Gideons to distribute Bibles on school property, and the School Board's attorney wrote to us to say that he will advise the principals of other schools in the district to discontinue any Bible distributions.

**City Agency Ends Affiliation with Gospel Choir After Receiving Letter from AU - December 2000, San Francisco, CA:** AU wrote to San Francisco officials to inform them that the Department of Parking and Traffic Commission Gospel Choir is unconstitutional. We received a letter from the Executive Director of Parking and Traffic stating that he had already contacted the City Attorney seeking advice regarding the choir, and that he has already taken steps to correct the problem.



**AU Warns School Officials to Limit Participation in Prayer Event - December 2000, Lancaster, OH:** AU wrote to officials of Lancaster City schools to take issue with the school Principal leading students in prayer at the school's "See You at the Pole" event. Attorneys for the Lancaster City Schools wrote to tell us that they believe that prohibiting teachers from attending the "See You at the Pole" event would violate the free exercise provisions of the First Amendment and, therefore, they intend to allow teachers to attend such events. The attorneys agreed, however, that the participation raised concerns of endorsement. As a result, the Board will ask that the community sponsors make clear in their advertising that the event is not school-sponsored and that the sponsors display a sign at the event, visible to passers-by, indicating this. In addition, the Board will remind school officials that the event may not be advertised at school and that the event must be held well before the school day.

**AU Halts Pre-Game Prayers by High School Football Coach - November 2000, Rocky Mount, VA:** AU wrote to officials of the Franklin County Schools to take issue with the Franklin High School football coach's practice of leading the team in prayer before each game. Principal William Gibson wrote to us to tell us that he instructed Coach Miles not to initiate or take part in any student-led prayer and to neither encourage nor discourage such activity by students in the future.

**AU Helps Put End to Pre-Game Prayers at Public High School - November 2000, Columbia, MD:** AU wrote to officials of the Howard County Public School System to take issue with the coaches at Wilde Lake High School leading their students in pre-game prayer. In response, Principal Plunkett wrote to us to say that the school understands the law and will adhere to it, that he has told all of the coaches to discontinue the practice, and that he will continue to monitor the situation.

**School Agrees to Prevent Football Coach from Encouraging Players to Attend Church Breakfasts - November 2000, Velma, OK:** AU wrote to officials of the Velha-Alma School District to take issue with a football coach who arranged breakfasts at a church and encouraged his players to attend church. The Superintendent of the School District wrote to tell us that the coach has been told to end this behavior.

**AU Prevents Teachers From Pressuring Students to Participate in "See You at the Pole" Events - November 2000, Greeneville, TN:** AU wrote to officials of the Greene County School District to take issue with teachers attending several "See You at the Pole" events. The Officer for Civil Rights for the Greeneville County Schools wrote back to say that the Schools will "appropriately reiterate the importance of constitutional considerations," especially in the area of "See You at the Pole" events. We wrote a follow-up letter requesting clarification about the instructions teachers will be given. The school's Officer for Civil Rights again responded. She explained that the district's position is that teachers and school officials are prohibited from soliciting, encouraging or participating in religious activities with students.

**AU Stops Chaplain from Leading Devotionals Before Football Games - September 2000, Beaufort, SC:** AU wrote to officials of the Beaufort County School District to take issue with a volunteer chaplain leading a non-denominational devotional before football games. Because we did not receive a timely response to our first letter, we sent the school

officials a follow-up letter. The football coach then called to tell us that the chaplain has been removed.

**AU Ensures That Football Coach Does Not Pray With Team - September 2000, Greenwood, SC:** AU wrote to officials of Greenwood School District 50 to take issue with a newspaper report stating that the football coach conducts weekly devotional and prayers with the football team. The Superintendent wrote to assure us that while the coach has made references to the strength of Samson, the coach does not pray, engage in proselytizing conduct, or otherwise endorse religion before students.

**AU Stops Judge From Establishing Court Program to Facilitate Religious Counseling - September 2000, Pensacola, FL:** Judge William P. White, Jr. of the County Court of Escambia County, Florida, began a “Lighthouse Project” by inviting local Pastors to establish their church as a place to which litigants can resort to seek resolution of their conflicts. The Judge then chaired a Project to develop “marriage guidelines” that called for Pastors to provide counseling sessions to engaged couples to provide them with “a biblical understanding of morality, marriage, and divorce,” to create a plan for churches to provide parenting classes to litigants, and to implement regular visits to the courthouse by church members who offered to pray with and for court employees. We were contacted about this issue by the President of the local AU Chapter, Bill Caplinger, and advised him about constitutional requirements and helped him prepare for a meeting called by the Chief Judge to address the propriety of the Project. Mr. Caplinger and Art Parish represented AU at the meeting, which resulted in the Chief Judge putting an end to the entire Project and all of its components.

**AU Convinces School District Not to Post “In God We Trust” In Public Schools - August 2000, Golden, CO:** AU wrote to officials with the Jefferson County Public Schools urging them to reject a proposal to post the national motto, “In God We Trust,” in the public schools. The proposal was subsequently rejected.

**AU Spearheads Opposition to Distribution of Bibles to Children on School Property - August 2000, Idaho City, ID:** AU wrote to officials at Basin Elementary Schools to take issue with the school’s practice of allowing the Gideons to distribute Bibles to children on school property. The school discontinued the practice upon receipt of our letter.

**AU Convinces Police Chief to Remove Religious Messages from Police Department Website - July 2000, Willow Springs, MO:** AU wrote to officials in Willow Springs to take issue with the posting of numerous religious messages on the Willow Springs Police Department’s website. We received a response from the Police Chief stating that he would modify his website to some extent to alleviate our concerns, but the revisions remain problematic and we sent him a follow-up letter outlining our renewed concerns. After receiving our second letter, the Police Chief removed all of the religious messages from his website, and sent us a letter thanking us for working with him and stating that he has every wish to comply with the law.

**On AU’s Recommendation, School Board Rejects “In God We Trust” Posters for Display in Public Schools - July 2000, Portage, MI:** AU wrote to the Portage School Board to ask them to reject a donation of six framed “In God We Trust” posters for display

in the Portage schools. We explained that, despite the fact that the phrase is the nation's motto, displaying the posters would lack a secular purpose and effect, particularly in the public school context. The posters were subsequently rejected by the School Board.

**AU Prevents Distribution of Bibles on School Grounds - July 2000, Bemus Point, NY:** AU wrote to officials of the Bemus Point Central School District to ask that it rescind its plans to allow New Testament distribution by the Gideons on school grounds. We received a letter from the School District's attorney stating that the District would not allow Bibles to be distributed on school grounds, and that the District would not facilitate Bible distribution on premises adjacent to school grounds.

**AU Ensures that School Board Complies With U.S. Supreme Court Decision Against Prayer Before Sporting Events - July 2000, Gaffney, SC:** AU wrote to officials of the Cherokee County School Board to take issue with the School District's stated intent to defy the United States Supreme Court's decision holding unconstitutional prayer before sporting events. The School Board's attorneys subsequently informed the Board that the high Court's decision must be obeyed, and then sent us a letter stating that the Board will comply with the Supreme Court's holding.

**AU Confirms that School's Chaplaincy Program is Lay Counseling Program - June 2000, Sour Lake, TX:** AU wrote to officials of the Hardin-Jefferson Independent School District to take issue with a Chaplaincy Program in which trained chaplains counsel and assist students, school employees, and their family members. The School Board's attorney wrote to us to say that the program is not a chaplaincy program, but a lay counseling program.

**AU Ensures That Bible History Course is Not Taught in Manner That Violates Establishment Clause - June 2000, Marion, VA:** AU wrote to officials of the Smyth County School District to take issue with Chilhowie's High School's Bible History course, which has been taught in a manner that violates the United States Constitution. We received a letter from the Superintendent stating that the offending teacher has been removed and that the course will not be taught in the fall.

**AU Successfully Pressures School District to Change its "Chaplaincy Program" to a "Lay Counseling Program" - June 2000, Anahuac, TX:** AU wrote to officials of the Anahuac Independent School District to take issue with a "Chaplaincy Program" in which trained chaplains counsel and assist students, school employees, and their family members. We received a response from the attorney for the School District stating that the name of the program was changed to "Lay Counseling Program" and that the counselors would be members of the community, rather than religious personnel.

**AU Takes Issue with Policy to Display Ten Commandments in Public Places - June 2000, Ransomville, NY:** AU wrote to the Niagara County Legislature to take issue with its recent passage of a "Hang Ten" resolution, which requests that the state legislature enact legislation allowing and encouraging the posting of the Ten Commandments in public places, including classrooms. We subsequently learned that the resolution was passed by the County, but the state never acted on it.

**AU Convinces School Board to Delay Approval of a Bible History and Literature Class - June 2000, Surry, VA:** AU wrote to the Surry County School Board to oppose the Board's approval of a Bible history and literature class. We asked the Board to refrain from implementing the plan so as to avoid exposure to legal liability. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the Board voted to delay the class indefinitely and to turn to outside experts to draft a constitutionally sound curriculum.

**AU Puts an End to Proselytizing in Public Schools - May 2000, Albert City, IA:** AU wrote to the Albert City-Truesdale Community School District to take issue with a practice of allowing members of the clergy to come into a school and walk around the cafeteria and engage students in religious conversations. The School District subsequently discontinued the practice.

**AU Challenges School's Decision to Allow Clergy to Proselytize in Schools - May 2000, Greenville, SC:** AU wrote to the Superintendent of the Greenville School District to take issue with a practice of allowing a clergy person to come into a school during the lunch hour to engage students in religious conversations. The school Principal subsequently discontinued the practice.

**AU Ensures that Public Funds Not Used to Sponsor Prayer Breakfast - May 2000, Marietta, GA:** AU wrote to the Cobb County Commission to object to the County's sponsorship of the "2000 Cobb County Prayer Breakfast." County employees processed ticket orders for the breakfast and the State's Governor Roy Barnes was the keynote speaker. We received a response to our letter from the Chairman of the Commission, stating that the County would be "fully reimbursed from the proceeds of the event for any and all expenses associated with the involvement of individual employees who assisted with the event during working hours, as well as for any supplies they may have used."

**AU Pressures Florida Dept. of Revenue to Revise Regulation Extending Tax Exemptions for Religious Publications - March 2000, Tallahassee, FL:** The Florida tax code provides a tax exemption for "religious publications." AU wrote to the Florida Department of Revenue to take issue with an implementing regulation that extends this exemption to Bibles and other Christian religious books, but not to religious books of other faiths. We explained that the regulation is both unconstitutional and inconsistent with the enabling statute. In response to our letter, the Department of Revenue initiated rulemaking to extend the sales tax exemption to all religious publications.

**AU Precipitates End to "Bible Study" Class Taught by Government Employee at Community Center - January 2000, West Milford, NJ:** AU wrote to officials in West Milford to take issue with a "Bible Study" class that is offered for senior citizens at a local Community Center and taught by the Center's program director, a government employee. The class is not taught from a secular, objective perspective; indeed, it concludes with a group prayer. The County Council subsequently decided to discontinue the class.

**AU Secures Commitment from School That Football Coach Will Not Lead Team in Prayer - January 2000, Baltimore, MD:** AU wrote to officials of the Baltimore City Public School System to take issue with the practice of a football coach at Lake Clifton-Eastern High School of leading and joining his team in prayer. We received a response

informing us that the coach has been instructed that he must cease this practice, which he has done.

## 1999

**AU Helps Prevent Adoption of Resolution That Would Allow Teaching of Creation Science in Public Schools - December 1999, Kanawha County, WV:** AU wrote to officials at the Kanawha County Board of Education to urge them to reject a pending resolution that would authorize the teaching of creation science in the public schools. On December 16, 1999, the board rejected the resolution by a 4-1 vote.

**AU Ensures Teachers and Principal at Public High School Comply with Supreme Court Precedent - December 1999, Clarksburg, WV:** AU wrote to officials at the Harrison County Board of Education to object to two matters relating to the operations of Liberty High School: some teachers are requiring objecting students to stand for the reading of the Pledge of Allegiance, in violation of Supreme Court precedent; and the Principal has displayed the Christian fish symbol on the door of his office. In response, the School District assured us that teachers were aware that students were not required to stand and agreed to have the Principal remove the fish symbol from the door.

**AU Alerts Commissioner That He Refrain From Asserting Religious Views in His Official Capacity - December 1999, Atlanta, GA:** AU wrote to officials of the Georgia Department of Agriculture to take issue with “A Thanksgiving Prayer For Our Fathers,” which appeared in the Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin, a publication of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The “Prayer” was actually a long message from the Department’s Commissioner requesting readers to pray for the state’s farmers. We explained in our letter that the Commissioner has every right to assert his religious views in his personal capacity but that he must refrain from doing so in his capacity as a government official. We received a response from the Bulletin’s editor thanking us for bringing the matter to his attention and for alerting him to constitutional requirements.

**AU Pressures Board of Education to Oppose Grant of Charter to Heritage Christian Center - December 1999, Aurora, CO:** AU wrote to officials of the Aurora Board of Education to oppose the grant of a charter to the Heritage Christian Center, which had closed down and sought to reopen as a charter school. On December 7, 1999, the Board voted to deny the charter, in part because of the school’s formerly religious nature.

**AU Ensures That Football Coach Does Not Lead Team in Prayer - December 1999, Germantown, MD:** AU wrote to officials at the Montgomery County Public Schools to take issue with a coach’s practice of leading the football team at Northwest High School in pre-game prayer. We received a response from the School Board’s general counsel stating that the coach did not and would not lead the team in prayer.

**AU Resolves Disciplinary Issues Regarding Students’ Practice of “Witchcraft” - December 1999, Crossville, TN:** AU wrote to officials at Glen Martin Elementary School to take issue with the issuance of a disciplinary report against two sixth graders for “practicing witchcraft.” We subsequently entered into negotiations with the School Board’s legal counsel about the matter, and the parents’ concerns were resolved.

**AU Instrumental in Getting Decision to Require Evolution Disclaimer in Textbooks Reversed - November 1999, Oklahoma City, OK:** The Oklahoma State Textbook Committee voted to require all new biology textbooks to carry a disclaimer stating that evolution is a “controversial theory” that entails “the unproven belief that random, undirected forces produced a world of living things.” AU wrote to the Oklahoma Secretary of Education to ask him to take measures to ensure the reversal or nullification of this vote, and to alert him that the disclaimer may fail to withstand a legal challenge. Thereafter, a dissenting member of the Textbook Committee asked the Oklahoma Attorney General to issue an opinion on whether the Committee had the statutory authority to take the action that it did. In early February 2000, Edmondson issued a decision finding that the Committee lacked the authority to require the disclaimer.

**AU Secures Commitment from School Officials Not to Allow Bibles to be Distributed to Students - November 1999, Caledonia, MI:** Teachers at an elementary school sent each fifth-grader home with a permission slip for his or her parent to sign to authorize school officials to furnish the child with a Bible provided by Gideons International. AU wrote to school officials to contest the constitutionality of the planned distribution. After receiving our letter, the school elected not to proceed with the distribution.

**AU Triggers Changes to School Board Policy Regarding Teaching of Evolution and Endorsement of Religion - October 1999, Lancaster, OH:** AU wrote to officials at the Lancaster City Schools to take issue with two provisions of School Board policy, one of which “encourages students and employees to actively participate in a religious affiliation of their choice,” and the other of which calls for “balanced discussion” of evolution and “the account of creation found in various scriptures.” In April 2000, the Board modified the former policy to state that the “Board respects the First Amendment rights of individual students and employees to believe or worship as they choose,” and modified the latter policy by stating that “instruction may not endorse or promote religious doctrine,” and deleting the references to a “balanced discussion” and “the account of creation.”

**AU Precipitates Decision to Withdraw Plans to Open Public School in Same Building as Parochial School - September 1999, Houston, TX:** AU wrote to officials of the Houston Independent School District to ask that they reconsider an agreement under which a local parochial school planned to open a public school in January 2000, located in the same building as the parochial school, to serve low-performing public school students. We informed the officials that the arrangement is rife with constitutional pitfalls. In mid-October, the School District withdrew the contract.

**AU Letters Result in Religious Messages Being Removed From Sheriff’s Official Website - September 1999, Fort Myer, FL:** AU wrote to Sheriff John McDougall to take issue with a “A Message from the Sheriff” on the website of the Lee County Sheriff’s office. Among other things, the Message stated that the problems plaguing our society are due to our loss of respect for the “Lord Jesus.” We explained that while the Sheriff is free to hold whatever views he wishes, the Constitution forbids his use of his public office to advocate those that endorse a religious perspective. We asked that he delete the offending passages. On October 19, 1999, the Sheriff removed the message from the website and replaced it with a new one that is essentially a political message, rather than a religious one.

However, more recently, the Sheriff's religious message was returned to the website, although far less prominently; it is now presented as one of many "letters from the Sheriff." Finally, in November 2000, Sheriff McDougall was voted out of the office and all religious material was removed from the website.

**AU Prevents Teaching of Creation Theory in Public School - September 1999, Misawa Air Base, Japan:** AU wrote to officials to object to the teaching of creationism by a science teacher at Edgren High School, a school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense on Misawa Air Base. We received a response thanking us for bringing the matter to the officials' attention, and stating that the high school Principal had met with the teacher in question and had "informed the teacher that he may not and must not teach the creation theory in his classroom."

**AU Intervenes to Stop Prayer and Other Religious Activities in Public School - September 1999, Tonopah, NV:** We wrote to officials of the Nye County School District to take issue with two matters: a local fundamentalist pastor being granted permission to come to a local high school to meet with students to conduct Bible study and prayer on the front lawn of the school during the school's lunch hour; and an English teacher conducting prayer meetings with students in her classroom, and writing biblical scriptures on the blackboard everyday. We learned from the person who brought this to our attention that the pastor's study and prayer sessions on the front lawn ceased, and that the English teacher was instructed by the Principal to stop writing biblical scriptures or engaging her students in other religious activity.

**AU Pressures School to Discontinue "Bible Club" - September 1999, Grosse Pointe, MI:** AU wrote to officials of the Grosse Pointe Public School System to take issue with a "Bible Club" that is operated by three "school moms" in a local elementary school. The Club's meetings take place once a week on school premises during the lunch hour. We explained that this arrangement runs afoul of constitutional requirements and the Equal Access Act, and asked that the meetings be brought to an end. The School District initially responded by stating that the Bible Club teachers are provided with the same access as all other members of the community who wish to form student clubs, and the arrangement is therefore constitutional. Thereafter, we learned that the School Board had hired a new attorney who was planning to take another look at this situation, so we wrote a follow-up letter to the new attorney further explaining our position. Thereafter, the new attorney informed the School Board that he was of the view that the club is unconstitutional, and the school opted to let the club continue through the 1999-2000 school year but then declined to renew permission for the club to continue thereafter.

**AU Convinces School to Cease Program of Bible Study and Prayer - September 1999, Washington, DC:** AU wrote to officials of the D.C. public schools to object to an arrangement between two public schools and a religious program known as the "STEP Program." The program has been provided with an office at the schools, through which it coordinates an after-school tutoring program that includes Bible Study, and a weekly student Bible Club. Moreover, on a few occasions, the Executive Director of the program has gone into classrooms to pray with students. We received a letter from the School District in January 2000 asserting the view that the program is constitutional because the schools are a "limited public forum" that must be made available on a viewpoint neutral basis. We wrote back to express our disagreement with this position, and subsequently

received a second letter stating that the STEP Program has been directed to “cease all Bible study or other religious activity” and that the Program has complied with that directive.

**AU Encourages School to Cancel Christian Events - August 1999, New Bern, NC:**

After receiving a complaint from the President of American United’s East Carolina Chapter, we wrote to officials of the Craven County Schools to take issue with a letter sent by the Principal of a local high school to ministers of local churches asserting that the “lack of Christian involvement” in students’ lives “leads to behavior problems” and “bad attitudes,” and asking the ministers to support a series of Christian events to be held at the local schools. In response to our letter, all of the scheduled events were cancelled.

**AU Spearheads Opposition to Policy Calling For Posting of Lord’s Prayer in Public Schools - August 1999, Appomattox, VA:**

AU wrote to officials of the Appomattox County Schools to take issue with efforts to develop a policy that calls for the posting of the Lord’s Prayer in the County’s four public schools. The board later voted to reject the proposal, and to adopt in its stead a policy that establishes a moment of silence during which students may “meditate, pray or engage in any other silent activity which does not interfere with, distract or impede other pupils in the like exercise of individual choice.”

**AU Pressures School Board to Reject Proposal to Introduce Bible Study Course in Public High Schools - July 1999, Kansas City, MO:**

AU wrote to school officials of the North Kansas City School Board to urge them to reject a proposal to introduce an elective Bible Study course in the local high schools. We advised them that the public schools have been almost uniformly unsuccessful in offering such courses, and that we will take legal action if they elect to proceed with the proposal and constitutional requirements are not met. Shortly thereafter, the School Board voted unanimously to reject the proposal.

**AU Encourages Board of Education to Prohibit Student-Led Prayer at Graduation - July 1999, Prince Frederick, MD:**

AU sent a letter to officials of the Calvert County Board of Education asking them to reject the Superintendent’s proposal that the Board pass a policy stating that it “strongly endorses the concept of community-sponsored baccalaureate services as a companion to graduation activities and directs the superintendent to develop administrative procedures that allow for such baccalaureate services to be held.” At its August meeting, the School Board voted to adopt a new policy that prohibits student-led prayer at graduation, and that permits community groups to hold baccalaureate services for the graduating class, but that prohibits the school from endorsing, promoting, or otherwise becoming involved in those services.

**AU Challenges Proposal to Provide State Funding for Bible Study Courses - July 1999, Atlanta, GA:**

AU wrote to officials of the Georgia State Board of Education urging them to reject a pending proposal to provide state funding for Bible Study courses in the Georgia public schools. The Board met on August 12, 1999, and voted to “table” the proposal until the Georgia Attorney General could review the course materials. In November, the AG issued an opinion stating that public schools can offer Bible Study courses only if they are presented in a secular manner, that the AG cannot provide a definitive response to whether the proposed curriculum is constitutional because this depends on the method and context in which the course is taught, and that the State Board of Education is not in a position to ensure that the courses are taught in accordance with



constitutional standards because the actual teaching of courses is supervised by local school systems. At their December 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board informally “tabled” the proposal, with the understanding that the state would not fund any Bible Study courses, and would instead leave such funding to local school districts that choose to include such courses in their curricula.

**AU Efforts Result in Revision to School Board Plans for Religious Symbols and Course in Public Schools - June 1999, Altoona, PA:** AU sent a letter to school officials in Altoona to urge them to reject a proposal that called for posting the Ten Commandments in the public schools, distributing Ten Commandments bookmarks to students, and offering an elective course on the Ten Commandments. In August 1999, a committee appointed to review the matter proposed that the proposal be rejected and that, as an alternative, officials create an elective in comparative religion, allow student “Ten Commandment Clubs,” and create a repository for “historic or religious” materials in the school library. The full Board later approved the alternative proposal. The School District has issued a policy to guide acceptance of submissions to the repository, which calls for the exclusion of materials that “disrespect other individuals, ethnic groups or religions.” After local activists made submissions on behalf of Wiccans and an atheist group, the repository was “suspended” without comment.

**AU Assists School District in Updating Policies Regarding Religion in Public Schools - May 1999, Washington, DC:** AU sent a letter to D.C. public school officials to object to the performance of a high school play entitled “Ruby,” which advocates sexual abstinence from an overtly religious perspective. Because we sent the letter on the day of the performance, we did not ask that the performance be cancelled. Instead, we asked that public school property not be used for auditions, rehearsals, or performances of this or similar plays in the future. In his response letter, the Associate Superintendent of the D.C. public schools acknowledged that the school’s involvement “may have overstepped the permissible boundaries” of the law, and assured us that the “presentation of ‘Ruby’ will no longer be sanctioned by school involvement, in any form, during schools hours.” Moreover, in investigating the matter, the Superintendent’s office discovered that the district’s policies regarding religion in the public schools are inadequate, and asked for our input in writing a comprehensive set of policies.

**AU Efforts Prompt Councilman’s to Take Down Ten Commandments in City Council Chambers - May 1999, Sierra Vista, AZ:** After receiving a complaint from two AUSCS members, we wrote to officials of the City of Sierra Vista to take issue with the placement by Councilman Vangilder of a framed plaque of the Ten Commandments on the side of his desk in the dais in the City Council chambers, in full view of the audience and television cameras. At the time that he put up the plaque, Vangilder made a speech stating that he recognizes that the display is unconstitutional but that he thinks it is nonetheless necessary to bring religion back into public life in light of the Littleton tragedy. After receiving our letter, the City Attorney advised Vangilder to remove the plaque, but Mr. Vangilder refused. Thereafter, the Council adopted a resolution stating that “no public funds would be spent to defend any public official or employee who disregarded the advice of the city attorney,” which prompted Vangilder to take down the plaque.

**AU Helps Prevent County Commissioners From Implementing “Character Training” Program - May 1999, McKinney, TX:** AU sent a letter to the Collin County

Commissioners to urge them to reject a proposal to implement a “character training” program for government employees. The program was to be provided by the Character Training Institute, an arm of the Institute in Basic Life principles, a fundamentalist group that aims to encourage people to apply biblically-based values to their lives. The program was never instituted.

**AU Intervenes to Prevent Distribution of Religious Materials to Students at Public Schools - May 1999, San Angelo, TX:** AU wrote a letter to officials of McGill Elementary School to object to the school’s practice of informing fifth-graders that they can go across the street to obtain a Bible from the Gideons, and then releasing them a little early to allow them to do so. We received a response from the Deputy Superintendent stating that “District personnel will be made aware that they are prohibited by law from distributing religious material on school property or at school sponsored functions,” and that they are prohibited from making announcements regarding the “distribution of religious material on or off the campus.”

**AU Efforts Ensure That Christian Group No Longer Able to Target Students for Bible Distribution - May 1999, Crosby, MN:** After receiving a complaint from a longstanding AU member, we sent a letter to officials of the Crosby Ironton Independent School District taking issue with the practice of Gideon Bibles being distributed to fourth and fifth graders through the assistance of school bus drivers. On one occasion, the Gideons gave the Bibles to the drivers and asked that they be distributed; on another the drivers took a detour into a public park and allowed the students to exit the bus to obtain the Bibles. We received a response from the Superintendent stating that he had been misled by the Gideons, that he was “disturbed” by these incidents, and that “any future requests from the Gideons to hand out bibles to our students will be denied.”

**AU Puts End to Teacher’s Participation in Prayers With Students - May 1999, Buckner, KY:** AU wrote to officials of Oldham County High School to take issue with a school teacher’s participation in prayers with student-members of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes during the group’s weekly meetings held in the teacher’s classroom. In response, the school’s attorney informed us that school officials were unaware of the teacher’s participation until they received our letter, and that they advised the teacher that he is “not to lead, incite, direct or participate” in student prayer, and that his role is to be limited to attending the meetings to provide supervision and ensure order.

**AU Prevents Distribution of Faith-Based Counseling Services to Students - April 1999, Stevens Point, WI:** After receiving a complaint from a member, AU wrote to the president of the Stevens Point School District to take issue with the School Board’s decision to “permit members of the faith community to provide School District counseling staff information regarding counseling services they could provide to students and parents,” with the information to be distributed to students at the discretion of School District staff. As a result, the School Board never instituted the program.

**AU Wins Exemption for Student Suspended for Refusal to Cut His Hair - April 1999, Gorman, TX:** AU attorneys represented Zachary Sanders, a freshman at Gorman High School who was suspended for his refusal to cut his hair on account of his adherence to Oahspe, a little-known religion in which men are advised to wear their hair long. After we provided the School Board with an affidavit of an Oahspe Minister explaining the

significance of long hair, and threatened to seek a temporary restraining order in federal court, the Board met in an emergency session and, together with the school Principal, agreed to allow Zachary to return to class without cutting his hair.

**AU Receives Assurance From School Board That Field Trips to Religiously-Affiliated Campsite Will Cease - April 1999, Waynesboro, PA:** AU wrote to the Waynesboro Area School District to take issue with field trips to a religiously-affiliated campsite at which religious iconography is displayed. In May 1999, we received a response from the School Board's attorney stating that they have a "full understanding" of our concerns, and indicating that such trips will not occur in the future.

**AU Warns School Regarding Religious Group's Performance at Middle School - March 1999, Lebanon, TN:** A middle school scheduled a student assembly at which the "Mighty Men" — a group that tours the country conducting stunts and feats of strength, punctuated by testimonials of their Christian faith — were to perform. The assembly was canceled after the school received a letter from AU threatening to take legal action in the event of an unconstitutional performance.

**AU Letter Leads School District to Forbid High School Basketball Coach to Join Team in Prayer - March 1999, Sacramento, CA:** We received complaints from local AU members about a practice of the Grant High School basketball coach of joining his team in prayer. After receiving our letter stating that this practice was unconstitutional, the School District forbade the coach from continuing the prayers.

**AU Contributes to Successful Campaign Against NYC Proposal for Pilot Voucher Program - March 1999, New York, NY:** AU sent a letter to the New York City Board of Education asking them to reject Mayor Giuliani's proposal to implement a pilot voucher program in New York City. Shortly thereafter, over fierce opposition from the Board of Education, the proposal was tabled. We received a letter from Education Chancellor Rudolph Crew thanking us for our support of his position.

**AU Defeats Opposition to Formation of an "Atheist Club" at Public School - February 1999, Belleville, MI:** AU wrote a letter setting forth the statutory and constitutional impropriety of school officials' resistance to the formation of an "Atheist Club" at South Middle School. Thereafter, a school teacher agreed to monitor the club's meetings on a bi-weekly basis, and the club was allowed to form.

**AU Challenges Erection of Ten Commandments in County Courthouse - February 1999, Dahlonaga, GA:** We sent a letter to the Lumpkin County Commission challenging the erection in the Lumpkin County Courthouse of a Ten Commandments plaque donated by a private minister. Initially, the Commission sent us a letter saying they would remove the plaque. However, they later reversed this decision and announced that they intended to keep the plaque but to add several other plaques and to entitle the display "Great Words and Thoughts on Good Character and Citizenship." We sent a second letter taking issue with this revision on the grounds that the title and content of the display still constituted unconstitutional governmental endorsement of religion. And in late April, the Nation of Islam wrote an open letter to the Commission asking to contribute an item to the display. In mid-May, the Ten Commandments plaque was quietly taken down by County officials.

**AU Ensures That Non-Religious Views Are Included in “Religious Roundtable Discussion” at Local High School - February 1999, Wheaton, IL:** A local high school planned to present a “Religious Roundtable Discussion,” at which local representatives of mainstream religions were asked to address moral and political questions. After receiving a letter from AU, the panel was diversified to include non-religious views, such as those of Secular Humanists.

**AU Letter Forces Change to Staff Monitoring of “Students for Christ” Club at Local Middle School - January 1999, Edinboro, PA:** At the request of local members, AU wrote to the General McLean School District to take issue with the participation of a Middle School teacher in the activities of the “Students for Christ” club. In response to our letter, the school agreed to have various school staff monitor the club’s meetings on a rotational basis, so as to ensure that a single teacher does not become involved in the club’s activities.

**AU Contributes to Rejection of Resolution Setting Forth County’s “Right” to Display Ten Commandments in Public Places - January 1999, Maryville, TN:** After receiving a letter from AU outlining the unconstitutionality of the proposal, the Blount County Commission voted 12-9 to reject a resolution setting forth the County’s “right” to display the Ten Commandments in public places.

**AU Helps Prevent Conversion of Two Local Catholic Schools Into Publicly Funded Charter School - January 1999, Chicago, IL:** AU sent letters to the Chicago Public School District taking issue with proposals to convert two local Catholic schools — St. Sabina and Our Lady of the Angels — into publicly funded charter schools. Our letters pointed out that the conversion raised constitutional problems and that there were particular problems with the portion of the proposal that called for offering religious instruction on a voluntary basis as an after-school program. Thereafter, both of the proposals stalled; and, in September 1999, the archdiocese decided that it is legally foreclosed from holding a charter and opted not to pursue either conversion.

**AU Fights to Prevent Introduction of Elective Bible Course in Public High Schools - January 1999, Youngstown, OH:** AU sent a letter to the Youngstown School Board advocating rejection of a proposal to introduce an elective Bible Study course in the public high schools. The Christian Coalition highlighted our letter on their website, and asked supporters to write letters in support of the course. To date, the district has not offered a Bible Study course in any of its schools.

## 1998

**AU Letter Triggers Investigation Into Practice of Releasing Fifth-Graders From Class to Obtain Bibles From Christian Group - December 1998, Asheville, NC:** AU wrote to the Henderson County Public School Board to take issue with a practice of releasing interested fifth-graders from class to obtain Gideon Bibles from persons allowed onto school premises. We received a letter from the attorney for the School District stating that the District takes the concern “very seriously” and will conduct an investigation and take appropriate measures.

**AU Letter Leads School District to Remove Prohibition on “Austin 3:16” Shirts - December 1998, Lancaster, PA:** In response to a letter from AU, the Lancaster School District agreed to discontinue its policy of prohibiting students from wearing T-shirts bearing the words “Austin 3:16,” which are worn by supporters of a professional wrestler known as “Stone Cold” Steve Austin, and which some Christian students found offensive.

**AU Opposes Teacher Involvement in Prayer With Students, Leading School Board to Adopt Policy Forbidding Religious Activities by Teachers - December 1998, Brookville, OH:** AU received a complaint that several teachers at a local elementary school regularly led students in prayer and otherwise engaged in proselytizing activity. After receiving our letter in opposition to these practices, the Superintendent prohibited the teachers from continuing these practices and the School Board adopted a policy forbidding religious activities by teachers.

**AU Spearheads Successful Opposition to Proposal to Create a “Public School Chaplain,” the First of Its Kind - November 1998, Brookville, OH:** A group known as “Public School Chaplaincy for America” proposed that the Brookville local schools create a position for a volunteer “Public School Chaplain,” the first of its kind in the nation. After receiving a letter from AU outlining the unconstitutionality of the proposal, the School Board declined to create the position.

**AU Convinces School District to Cease Disseminating “Release Time Program” Pamphlet - October 1998, Turner, OR:** AU received a complaint about school employees disseminating a pamphlet encouraging elementary school children to participate in the local “Release Time Program.” After receiving our letter regarding the impropriety of this practice, the School District agreed to cease disseminating the pamphlet.

**AU Protects Student’s Right to Create “Atheist Club” at Local High School - October 1998, Grand Blanc, MI:** Junior Micah White met with resistance when he tried to form an “Atheist Club” at Grand Blanc High School, where a Bible Club has been in existence for several years. Micah was told that he needed to find a teacher to monitor the club’s meetings but, because of the club’s controversial nature, no teacher was agreeable to doing so. After receiving a letter from AU threatening to take legal action, the school waived the requirement of a faculty-monitor and allowed the club to form. Forty students attended the club’s first meeting.

**AU Letter Leads City Council to Take Down 30” Cross Overlooking City - June 1998, Fortuna, CA:** After receiving a letter from AU, the City Council voted to take down a large, white, wooden, 30” cross that had overlooked the city since 1941 from atop a hill in a public park.