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## Christmas With The ACLU: Eliminating Freedom, To Protect Liberty

By Alan Sears

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This Christmas, while most Americans are looking for presents under the tree, the American Civil Liberties Union will be following their own hallowed holiday tradition: looking for scapegoats, under the guise of preserving liberty.

Even now, the Tennessee ACLU is focusing on a lawsuit they've filed in federal court to eliminate what they consider a serious threat to the children at Wilson County's Lakeview Elementary School: "a pattern and a practice of promoting and endorsing" – wait for it – "religious activities."

Now, a warning: what's going on at Lakeview isn't pretty. It's enough, really, to make a Grinch blush. Among the activities giving the ACLU the willies:

- The Praying Parents, a group that meets once a month in the school cafeteria before school to pray for students, staff, and faculty.

Pretty spooky, that. How to measure the emotional fallout for children, if they find out some grown-ups care? Of course, the ACLU is on record as defending adults who want to have sex with children, or put child pornography on the Internet. So, preying on kids is okay, but praying for them is dangerous stuff?

- The district allows students to participate in the annual "See You At The Pole" event, where Christian young people across the nation gather at their school flagpole to pray for their teachers and classmates.

So: young people come together in small groups, of their own free will, to pray. Other than freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and free exercise of religion, can you think of any valid Constitutional defense for such behavior?

- Students and faculty are also allowed to commemorate the National Day of Prayer, celebrated at the White House and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. each spring.

There they go again. Christian teachers and students sometimes ... pray. On a day when their leading government officials meet to ... pray. What horrors is this leading to? Calisthenics on the National Day of Fitness? Planting trees on Arbor Day? Can we sue them for that, too?

- Some teachers have been known to allow students to pray and play worship songs in their classroom.

The offending prayer came during a re-enactment of the first Thanksgiving feast. (Maybe if the Pilgrims had known their pre-supper supplications would cause such a stir, they'd have just skipped the intercessions altogether. In which

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case, we'd now be celebrating ...Eating Day.)

The worship song was on a CD brought in for Show-and-Tell by a kindergartener, whose three-year-old brother is suffering from cancer. The CD was made by family friends to raise money for his medical treatments.

- And then there was the annual Christmas program, which ACLU officials contend was overly Christianized.

It's one thing to walk in a "Winter Wonderland." It's another to sing "Away in a Manger" and "Silent Night." Except, of course, that Christmas is a celebration of ... the birth of Christ. If we start weeding that little detail out, what's next? We stop mentioning racial equality on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day? No reference to the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July?

"Religious freedom for everyone is jeopardized when public schools promote and endorse religious activities," according to Hedy Weinberg, executive director of the Tennessee ACLU. (They pay her to say things like that with a straight face.) "It is unfortunate that we had to go to court to protect religious freedom, but we had no other choice."

A lot of the soldiers overseas today think they're over there, among other things, to protect religious freedom. Turns out, they could've just stayed home and taken CDs away from kindergartners. And, really, as a parent, wouldn't you feel better, knowing no one else, anywhere, is praying for your child today?

"We are pursuing this lawsuit in order to ensure the constitutional guarantee of separation of church and state," Weinberg adds, "so that Wilson County residents can decide for themselves whether or not they want to practice a particular religious faith."

Fair enough, only a) there is no such "constitutional guarantee," and b) Wilson County residents have already made that decision. And most have decided that Christianity is the faith they want to practice.

Does everyone go along with that? No. Are Christians at Lakeview cramming their faith down the throats of those whose inclinations are toward other faiths, or toward no faith at all? No.

No one stood up in a Lakeview classroom and said, "Everyone here who's Baptist gets an 'A.' Presbyterians can go to recess first. Catholics can have extra chocolate pudding at lunch."

No favoritism. No forced prayers. Just a group of Americans for whom faith is a natural, integral part of their day-to-day life.

And a few neighbors, and some well-funded attorneys, who find that terrifying.

This year, as every year, all the ACLU wants for Christmas is to find more ways of eliminating freedom, in the name of preserving liberty.

Here's hoping Santa passes them by.

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