

AIR FORCE ACADEMY FOES LOSE

On February 9, a federal judge upheld the right of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) to hold a prayer luncheon. The Catholic League hailed it as a victory for religious liberty and free speech.

On January 24, Bill Donohue wrote to Lt. Gen. Michael C. Gould, Superintendent of the USAFA, applauding him for standing by the decision to welcome 1st Lt. Clebe McClary as the guest speaker at the February 10 luncheon. Lt. McClary is a Vietnam War Decorated Veteran and a known evangelical inspirational speaker.

Those who opposed his visit did so on the basis of trumped up charges; they even sought the ouster of Lt. Gen. Gould. Mikey Weinstein, the head of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, is an anti-religious zealot who has been working around the clock for several years trying to scrub the USAFA clean of all religious expression. He sued the USAFA, along with a professor of economics, David Mullin.

The Catholic League jumped on this issue right away because we have locked horns with Weinstein in the past, and are well aware of false accusations he has made against evangelicals over the years.

What was most striking about the lawsuit was that it was all based on a hypothetical scenario: U.S. District Judge Christine Arguello ruled that Mullin did not have standing to sue because “he has not met his burden that he will actually or imminently suffer the injury he fears.”

The judge was right. Not only was the event voluntary, Mullin testified that he never suffered retribution when he decided not to go to previous prayer luncheons. Indeed, as told by a reporter from the Associated Press who interviewed him after the verdict, Mullin acknowledged “he couldn’t say with certainty that he would face retribution for not attending.”

In other words, this entire lawsuit was an exercise in demagoguery: unsupported claims of reprisal were made by those who sought to censor the religious speech of a person they dislike. It is too bad they weren’t fined by the judge for bringing a frivolous lawsuit.

The usual enemies of religious freedom, such as Americans United for Separation of Church and State, have been at war

with the Air Force Academy for years. Their immediate enemy is evangelicals, but their real enemy is the public expression of any religion.