

AIR FORCE ACADEMY FOES LOSE

Yesterday, a federal judge upheld the right of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) to hold a prayer luncheon; it is scheduled for today. Addressing the decision is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

On January 24, I 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 national hero who should be welcome to speak on any campus. Unfortunately, there are some who sought to silence him because he is a committed evangelical; they even sought the ouster of Lt. Gen. Gould.

What was most striking about the lawsuit, brought by a long-time enemy of the USAFA, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, and an economics professor, David Mullin, 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 USAFA for years. Their immediate enemy is evangelicals, but their real enemy is the public expression of

any religion.