

DENVER AIRPORT OFFICIALS BOW TO CENSORS

Officials at Denver International Airport (DIA) have decided that the Mass schedule for Catholic passengers cannot be announced on its public address system. The ban comes in the wake of several months of deliberation: one person had previously complained that it was improper to announce the schedule of Masses on Sunday and holy days of obligation on the public address system; religious services are held in the airport's chapel.

Jews and Muslims have opted not to use the public address system to announce the time of their services. More important, they do not object to the system being used to announce the schedule of Masses. The only group that supported the ban was the local chapter of the ACLU.

On December 5, DIA made public its new rule, which reads as follows: "The airport's interfaith chapel is open 24 hours for quiet meditation on terminal level 6 southeast. For scheduled service information, please dial 2036 on a white paging telephone."

Our reaction, which was not positive, drew a mixed response from Denver media outlets. Here is the statement:

"DIA officials have delivered a 'compromise' which compromises no one's rights save Catholics: since it was only Catholic services that were being announced, the decision to neuter this information by going with a generic substitute is both cowardly and offensive. In effect, lawyers for the airport are saying that they would rather issue a gag order before ever confronting the censors at the ACLU.

"DIA authorities want us to believe that their decision followed 'months of legal research, weighing of public opinion

and exhaustive internal discussion.' Yet what they produced suggests that it is their commitment to principle that is really exhausted."