

“PROSELYTIZING” IN A FLORIDA SCHOOL



Patrick Capriola, the assistant principal at the Bannerman Learning Center, a school in Northeastern Florida, is suing the principal, Linda Turner, and the Clay County school district, claiming that Turner violated his Constitutional rights by sending emails of a partisan political and religious nature. He maintains that by doing so she subjected him and other employees to her proselytizing efforts.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue weighed in as follows:

Even the brazen members of the sensitivity police may smart at some of the “crimes” committed by Linda Turner. She happens to believe that oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska makes sense; evidently, Patrick Capriola disagrees. So what? He is right to contend that there is a First Amendment right in play here, but it is not his right to curb her right to free speech—it is hers to exercise. It is one thing for a school district to prohibit employees from emailing their colleagues, it is quite another to register objections based on their content.

It is Turner’s Christian beliefs that really bothers Capriola. Turner is accused of sending emails he objects to, which include the following: she told the faculty to “enjoy God at work at the North Pole”; she requested that they pray for rain in Texas; and she said her faith “may move mountains.”

Let’s concede that some might find these missives disagreeable, or even worse. But to beckon the heavy hand of the state to police these matters is not only astonishing, it is pernicious.

One more thing. It is not altogether shocking to learn that a Christian believes her faith “may move mountains.” After all, when he won the Democratic primary in 2008, Barack Obama promised that when he is finished governing, “we will be able to look back and tell our children that this was the moment...when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal.” And he said he could do this all by himself!