

## **Steps Students, Parents, and the Community Can Take**

1. Contact your school board members. Provide members a copy of: (A) the U.S. Department of Education's "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools" ("Prayer Guidelines"); (B) the Model Student Speaker Policies; and (C) Summary of the State of the Law: Prayer in Public Schools.

2. The goal is to have the school board adopt the Model Student Speaker Policies to bring the school district into compliance with the U.S. Department of Education's Prayer Guidance.

3. Ask school board members to put the matter of adopting the Model Student Speaker Policies on the official agenda for a school board meeting.

In talking with school board members, there are several facts that should motivate action on this matter:

A. Receipt of future federal funding by the school district depends upon the Board having policies that follow the U.S. Department of Education's Prayer Guidelines. Most schools do not currently have policies that fully comply with the Prayer Guidelines. School districts need to adopt the Model Student Speaker Policies to bring them into compliance with the Prayer Guidelines;

B. The Texas State Board of Education already passed a Resolution recommending Model Student Speaker Policies to be used as aids by all Texas public schools. The Texas State Board of Education mailed a copy of this Resolution and the Model Student Speaker Policies to all Texas school districts during the 2000/2001 school year, and the school districts should have already acted on these. For a full discussion of the actions taken by the Texas State Board of Education, see the section of the law review article entitled "Model Student Speaker Policies Adopted As Aids for School Districts by Texas State Board of Education." Also, see Appendix B of the law review article containing the Resolution passed by the Texas State Board of Education along with the Model Student Speaker Policies.

C. Representatives from a wide variety of organizations, including the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, have favorably reviewed and commented on the Model Student Speaker Policies. For the texts of these comments, see footnote 179 of the law review article.

When discussing the Model Student Speaker Policies with school board members stick to educational reasons that support adoption of the new policies by the school district. Before speaking to any school officials about this subject, it is recommended that you read two sections of the law review article: (A) "Secular Purposes of Student Speaker Policies," and (B) "Secular Motivation Required by School Officials in Enacting Student Speaker Policies." There are numerous secular educational reasons supporting adoption of the proposed student speaker policies. Stick to these types of secular (non religious) arguments since government officials are not allowed to consider either pro-religious or anti-religious arguments when adopting school policies.

4. Get others involved to support the effort, to attend the school board meeting, and to commit to contact or write a letter to school board members asking them to adopt the Model Student Speaker Policies. Get some students and parents lined up to speak at the school board meeting.

5. During the school board meeting there is a period called the “Open Forum” in which individuals may address the school board for up to 5 minutes each on any subject. The entire Open Forum lasts only 30 minutes. Therefore, if there are more than 6 speakers, each speaker will have less than 5 minutes--since the 30 minutes will be divided equally among the speakers. Unless the board directs otherwise, the Open Forum will be the appropriate time for people to speak in favor of the student speaker policies. Those speaking must sign up to speak shortly before the meeting begins. Remarks should focus on educational benefits and other secular (non religious) supports for the policies.