



September 25, 2015

The Honorable Jon Thompson
City of Coolidge
130 W. Central Ave.
Coolidge, AZ 85128

Dear Mayor Thompson,

The Secular Coalition for Arizona represents Arizonans who value public policies free from religious influence. Public policy free of religious preference is the best way to ensure freedom of conscience for Arizonans of all faiths and of none.

Prayer at government meetings is unnecessary. When government bodies lend their power and prestige to organized religion, it amounts to an endorsement that excludes the 22.8% of the population that does not identify with an organized religion. Even when prayers are "nondenominational," any form of prayer will inevitably exclude various taxpayers and constituents.

The Secular Coalition for Arizona does not support Monday's unanimous approval of Resolution 15-32, a resolution regarding City Council Meeting invocations to be delivered by members of an organized religious or spiritual organization. Specifically, Section 4.2 states "The invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by an eligible member of religious/spiritual organizations in the incorporated limits of the City of Coolidge, Arizona," a policy which excludes atheists, nontheists, and the increasing number of people living in Coolidge who do not subscribe to a particular organized religion or faith.

Because of the legal uncertainty and the exclusionary effect such prayers have on nontheists and others who do not share the faith of the officiant, **the best practice is to exclude invocations at Council meetings as your council has been doing for years.**

We ask that if the Council is unwilling to reverse this decision that you develop an invocation policy that is inclusive for atheists as well as all religious minorities.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this further and respectfully request a meeting with you on this matter. I will follow up with a phone call to your office within the next week. If you'd like to reach me before then, my email address is tory@secularaz.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tory Anderson".

Tory Anderson
Director of Government Affairs
Secular Coalition for Arizona