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AG Schimel Urges Supreme Court to Protect Prayer at Public Meetings

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel and a coalition of 22 states are urging the U.S. Supreme Court to protect the practice of lawmaker-led prayer at public meetings.

“Religious freedom is one of our most sacred American values and rights,” said Attorney General Schimel. “And the right to express your faith also extends to all elected officials as they govern, which is why we are defending the permitting of lawmaker-led prayer at public meetings. In fact, our founding fathers instituted the practice of commencing legislative sessions with prayer.”

The coalition filed a brief Wednesday asking the Supreme Court to hear arguments and confirm the constitutionality of the practice. Such a decision would clear confusion among the lower courts and strike down a ruling that impacts Wisconsin.

The coalition argues lawmaker-led prayer is woven into the fabric of American society. The practice also is fully consistent with the Constitution and our nation’s long tradition of non-coercive expressions of faith in the public sector.

The brief further cites numerous examples nationwide of states, counties and municipalities that open meetings with a government official’s prayer. It argues many governing bodies cannot afford to hire a full-time chaplain or recruit volunteer clergy.

The case, *Lund vs. Rowan County*, focuses on a North Carolina county’s practice of opening its meeting with prayer offered by its commissioners. The coalition’s friend-of-the-court brief is filed in support of the North Carolina county.

Wisconsin filed its brief in support of free expression of faith along with West Virginia, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and Utah, along with the Governor of Kentucky.

A copy of the brief is attached.