

**Advocates for Faith and Freedom News Release**  
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## ***COURT EMPLOYEES SUE COURT FOR RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION***

**SAN DIEGO** – Advocates for Faith and Freedom filed a lawsuit today with the Federal District Court in San Diego on behalf of several employees whose constitutional right of equal access was denied by the Superior Court of San Diego when they were forced to stop using a weekly meeting place for their lunchtime Bible study.

In April 2006, Mindy Barlow and Dalia R. Smith, court employees for the Superior Court, were told that their Bible study group could not meet in an empty jury room or courtroom during the lunch hour, even though other groups are allowed to use the court's facilities. The Bible study group had been meeting since 2000 when the court initially gave them permission. Six years later, they were suddenly and arbitrarily denied use, forcing them to seek further approval. Meanwhile, the court instituted a policy requiring all individuals, groups, or organizations seeking to use court facilities to submit an application. When the Bible study participants submitted their application, the courts denied their request, stating that approval of the Bible study would violate the separation of church and state.

"The constitutional rights of these court employees cannot be ignored simply because they work for the state," said Advocates' Legal Counsel, Jennifer Monk. "This Bible study should be given access to court facilities in the same manner as other groups, regardless of the fact that they meet to study the Bible."

By rejecting the court employees' right to hold a Bible study, the San Diego Superior Court has directly violated the group members' First Amendment rights of free speech and free exercise of religion. The lawsuit accordingly asks the Federal District Court to declare the policy implemented by the courts unconstitutional and, in doing so, to allow the Bible study to resume meeting in court facilities.

Robert Tyler, General Counsel for Advocates for Faith and Freedom commented: "It is not too surprising when government agencies misapply applicable constitutional principles, but this is the Superior Court of California – they should know better."

Advocates' co-counsel on the case is the American Center for Law and Justice, a constitutional legal organization based in Virginia Beach, VA.

Advocates for Faith and Freedom is a national nonprofit legal organization whose aim is to protect religious liberty in the courts. For more information, please visit [www.faith-freedom.com](http://www.faith-freedom.com).