



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 28, 2011

## Judge Rules Pastor Can Pray “in Jesus’ Name” at Memorial Day Service

In granting a temporary restraining allowing Rainey to deliver his specifically Christian prayer, Hughes scolded the Veterans Affairs agency, telling the officials that they had gone too far in “decreeing how citizens honor their veterans.” Explained the judge in his ruling, “The government cannot gag citizens when it says it is in the interest of national security, and it cannot do it in some bureaucrat’s notion of cultural homogeneity.”



Reported the *Chronicle*: “For the past two years, Rainey has given the Memorial Day invocation at the cemetery to honor U.S. soldiers who have fought and died. The invocation is sponsored by a private group, the National Cemetery Council for Greater Houston, but held at the Houston National Cemetery, which is public property.”

But before this year’s program the cemetery director, Arleen Ocasio, asked to see Rainey’s planned prayer, which she rejected and asked him to change, removing the reference to Jesus. “While it is very well written,” Ocasio wrote to Rainey on May 19, “I must ask you to edit it. The tone of all messages must be inclusive of all beliefs, need to be general and its fundamental purpose should be specific to those we are honoring, and non-denominational in nature.”

As the episode unfolded in the media, Jared Woodfill, chairman of the Harris County Republican Party, rallied local conservative voters to come to Rainey’s defense. “We were outraged and shocked when we heard this was happening, that our government was telling a pastor how he could pray,” said Woodfill, who sent out an e-mail blast and automated call to his group’s contact list, asking them to get involved.

“Recently President Obama’s Veterans Affairs refused a local pastor’s right to pray according to his faith,” Woodfill said in the message, asking voters to contact the cemetery director to express their concern. “It’s clearly a violation of this pastor’s First Amendment rights for the federal government to come in and say you can not pray in the name of Jesus,” he said.

In response Ocasio issued a statement explaining that “National Cemeteries are places for all Veterans, of all beliefs. We cannot be exclusive at a ceremony meant to be inclusive for all our Nation’s Veterans.”

Following the Judge’s ruling in his favor, Rainey told reporters that he had “never said a prayer in my life that didn’t end with Jesus Christ. It was unrealistic expectation for me not to include the name of Jesus Christ.”

Jeff Mateer of the [Liberty Institute](#), a conservative legal advocacy group that represented Rainey,



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applauded the ruling in his client's favor. "The judge rightly and strongly ruled that the VA's attempt to censor Pastor Rainey's prayer violates the Constitution and dishonors the veterans Memorial Day is meant to honor," he said. "We are glad that the government conceded that its position against Pastor Rainey's prayer is wrong. Pastor Rainey's invocation will take place on Monday as planned, and now, he will not be asked to forsake his beliefs to do so."

Rainey said that while he was disappointed that it took legal action to enforce his position, "I am glad that the judge agreed that removing Jesus' name from my prayer is unconstitutional. I am honored to be allowed to pray in the name of Jesus at this somber remembrance of our nation's fallen."



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