



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 23, 2011

Tulsa Cop to Sue City Over Order to Attend Islamic Event

Paul Fields, a 41-year-old veteran who joined the force in 1995, refused to order officers under his command to attend the mosque's Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, he says, because it violated his First Amendment rights of association and religion and departmental policy.

"We want to make it very clear, it's not related just because it's a mosque[; that] hasn't anything to do with his ultimate decision," Scott Wood, Fields' attorney, told Tulsa's NewsOn6.com. "It has to do with the intersection of religious rights of an individual to not associate with other people if they choose not to."



[According to NewsOn6.com](#), attendance at the event was mandatory because no one wanted to attend. Each patrol division is supposed to send nine persons:

Memos show it was originally voluntary to attend, but because of a lack of people signing up, Deputy Chief Daryl Webster sent a memo saying each patrol division would send a total of 6 officers and 3 supervisors to the event.

Fields declined to attend, [according to](#) a memo he sent to a supervisors:

I take exception with requiring officers to attend this event. Past invitations to attend religious/non-religious institutions for similar purposes have always been voluntary. I believe this to be an unlawful order, as it is in direct conflict with my religious convictions, as well as to be conscience shocking.

This is not a police "call for service," which I would readily respond to, as required by my Oath of Office. Instead, it is an invitation to, tour a Mosque, meet Muslim Leadership, watch a congregational prayer service, and receive "presentations on beliefs, human rights and women." It is my opinion, and that of my legal counsel, that forcing me to enter a Mosque when it is not directly related to a police call for service is a violation of my civil rights.

Tulsa Police Chief Chuck Jordan [transferred Fields](#) while the department [conducts an investigation](#) and defended reassigning Fields by noting that the police must protect all citizens regardless of their religion.

In a memo to Fields, Deputy Chief [Daryl Webster wrote](#) that officers are not being forced to participate in a religious ceremony that violates their religious beliefs and that they attend similar events at synagogues and churches.

There is no distinction between performing our lawful duties in a reactive manner (call response) and doing so in a proactive manner (community outreach). Both are policing responsibilities and both are essential to our mission....



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Personnel attending the Islamic Society's Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, whether voluntarily on or detail, do so as representatives of the Police Department in a community policing program, on duty and as part of their duties. As with any other community outreach event, they are not required to participate in any religious ceremony, make any profession of faith, or express opinions on or sympathy with any religious belief system.

Webster also noted that Catholics have invited police to participate in religious ceremonies but that officers are not required to do so. In this case, he writes, police are merely being asked to meet with the public.

[The department issued](#) the following statement:

The Tulsa Police Department has been invited to a Law Enforcement Appreciation Event at the Islamic Society of Tulsa. One of the Department's missions is that of Community Outreach. To facilitate this effort, the Police Department determined this event was a community outreach opportunity and attendance was appropriate.

This community outreach event is a function of community policing which is every bit as much a part of this department's mission as call response. This event is an opportunity to meet the public we serve, exchange information and build trust.

Furthermore, the Department never has and never will select who we provide services for based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity or preferences. Police officers often are required to contact citizens of diverse backgrounds and provide equal service regardless of any real or perceived bias.

Contrary to what may have already been reported in scheduling this event, the Police Department and the Islamic Society of Tulsa very deliberately arranged attendance so that officers need not participate in any religious discussion or observance that would create any discomfort or inconvenience for them.

The Tulsa Police Department is disappointed that our department's position has been so thoroughly misstated.

For its part, [the mosque says](#) it arranged the event to accommodate whatever officers wished to do. Sheryl Siddiqui of the Islamic Society of Tulsa, told NewsOn6.com: "We tried to anticipate these concerns by stating on the invitation what time the prayer service begins and ends so they could come observe if they wanted or if they wanted nothing to do with the religious portion, they could come, eat, visit and leave at their leisure."

[The invitation describes](#) what will be a "casual come-and-go atmosphere" with American and ethnic food. It says presentations on the items Fields listed in his memo are available "upon request."

Members of the Islamic Society, [TulsaWorld.com reported](#), wanted to express appreciation to the police for arresting a man who sent a "letter and a video he had made of himself smearing a Quran and an image of an Islamic religious figure with pork chops and grilling those items."

A statement from [the society said](#) it "stands by its invitation to show appreciation to anyone in law enforcement and their staff for their service and sacrifice to our community."

[Siddiqui said](#) the society had hosted three or four such events in the past without a problem, the website reported.



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