

THE  
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OF ACLU,  
INC.



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September 13, 2010

Mayor Robert L. Butler  
Marion City Hall  
1102 Tower Square  
Marion, Illinois 62959  
Mayor@CityOfMarionIL.gov

Re: Proposed Ten Commandments Display

Dear Mayor Butler:

I write on behalf of the ACLU of Illinois, and its 20,000 members and supporters, to urge the City of Marion not to erect a Ten Commandments display on the City's Tower Square.

The Ten Commandments are highly religious. According to Christians and Jews, God gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai. Many of the commandments are purely religious, such as the ban on idol worship. Some of these religious commandments contradict the religious and other beliefs of millions of polytheistic and non-theistic Americans. Thus, when government displays the Ten Commandments on its own property, it endorses the religious beliefs of some Americans, while sending the message that other Americans are outsiders and second-class citizens. Accordingly, courts have struck down such displays. *See, e.g., McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky*, 545 U.S. 844 (2005) (striking down a Ten Commandments display at a courthouse); *Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39 (1980) (striking down Ten Commandments displays in public schools).

The City apparently is considering the sale of part of Tower Square to a private group that would erect a Ten Commandments display. Such a land transfer would not diminish the government's endorsement of the Ten Commandments' religious message. Indeed, the only government purpose of such a transfer, before the display was erected, would be to advance the display.

In sum, the ACLU urges the City of Marion not to endorse the religious beliefs of some Americans by erecting a Ten Commandments display on Tower Square. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (312) 201-9740, extension 316.

Sincerely,

Adam Schwartz

cc: Stephen R. Green, Marion City Attorney