



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 13, 2011

Calif. High School Rejects Bible-Verse Bricks, Bails on Fundraiser

A California high school has canceled a fundraiser involving inscribed paver bricks after two generous donors insisted that their bricks be inscribed with Bible verses. The two Christian women, Lou Ann Hart and Sheryl Caronna, had contributed several hundred dollars for the pavers that were to be included with others placed along walkways at California's Palm Desert High School (left). The women asked that their bricks include scripture quotations including Psalm 68:34, Luke 17:13, Romans 8:31, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Ephesians 5:32.



PDHS

But before the bricks were installed on school grounds, the women were informed that because of the religious messages on the pavers, they would not be included along the walkways at the school, reported [OneNewsNow.com](#). When the women responded to the news by filing a lawsuit to compel the Desert Sands Unified School District to include the scriptural messages, the district countered by canceling the fundraiser and refunding the money to all donors.

David Cortman of the [Alliance Defense Fund](#) (ADF), the conservative legal advocacy group that represented the women in court, declared that Christians should be allowed to express themselves on public school campuses, just like everyone else. It is cowardly to shut down everyone's participation in this program simply to keep out Christian speech.

Cortman said that the district had approved the Buy a brick, inscribe a message fundraiser created by the Palm Desert High School Parent-Teacher Organization (see page seven of the district's [PTO newsletter](#)), with no limitation given other than the length of the inscriptions on the pavers.

According to the ADF, fundraiser guidelines stipulated that messages could pay tribute, honor a legacy, commemorate a special event, or recognize various entities. But school officials changed their minds when they saw the women's completed bricks, arguing that the Bible verses would have constituted an unconstitutional establishment of religion even though officials had okayed, among other messages, a Hindu-flavored quote from Mahatma Gandhi, as well as a Bible verse in Spanish.

When the PTO's Karen Rohrbaugh saw the women's Bible-themed bricks, she quickly e-mailed high school principal Patrick Walsh, alerting him to the religious verbiage, to which Walsh responded: We need to respectfully decline the donation of bricks quoting scripture from the bible. I'm sure most parents will understand the constitutional protections regarding the separation of church and state.

While perhaps most parents would, Hart and Caronna didn't, prompting the district to scrap the fundraiser rather than find itself eating crow and begrudgingly including the women's commemoration of their faith in God.

There is absolutely nothing unconstitutional about a Bible verse on a brick when a school opens up a



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program for anyone to express a personal message, said Cortman. The school simply could have allowed the Bible verses, but instead they chose to punish everyone.



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