



## Office of the Sheriff

JULIAN C. WHITTINGTON  
SHERIFF

PARISH OF BOSSIER

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May 23, 2013

The Honorable Bobby Jindal, Governor  
P.O. Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Dear Governor Jindal,

As a Christian, Sheriff and American citizen, I am writing you to express my frustration and concern over the persistent aggression and infringement of our religious freedoms which have been imposed upon the law enforcement grant programs, specifically related to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE).

Funding for some important programs has hit a road block due to the mere mention of God and the use of voluntary prayer. This appalling situation arose when someone in the Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights, in Washington, D.C. objected.

Since 2002, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office has successfully administered the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program. Sanctioned by the United States Marine Corps, the Young Marines Program provides community-based physical education programs that are designed to teach young men and women, ages 8 to 18, respect for their bodies through physical fitness, which in return, will instill resistance to the temptations of illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco use. The focus of the Young Marines Program is character-building, along with core values of discipline, leadership, teamwork and commitment. In addition, this program instills into the participants the ideals of honesty, integrity and respect and at-risk youth developing goals of academic success. The Young Marines Obligation states, "From this day forward, I sincerely promise, I will set an example for all other youth to follow and I shall never do anything that would bring disgrace or dishonor upon God, my Country and its flag, my parents, myself or the Young Marines. These I will honor and respect in a manner that will reflect credit upon them and myself. Semper Fidelis."

The Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program has been provided to Bossier Parish youth free of charge. Over the last several years, this program has been partially funded by the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) provided by the LCLE. This program is instructed by a Bossier Parish Deputy, who is a former U.S. Marine, and several active U.S. Marine volunteers and has successfully graduated over 1,000 juveniles since 2002. This program has the support

*[www.bossiersheriff.com](http://www.bossiersheriff.com)*

of the Bossier Parish School Board, 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court, 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney, Bossier City Court, Bossier City Police Department and the Office of Youth Development Juvenile Probation. Because of the great success of the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program, local judges started sentencing court-ordered juveniles to the program as a diversion from jail time. While this was a great benefit to the juveniles, the court system and to the taxpayers, the Young Marines Program was never intended to be a "diversion" program. In a November 26, 2012 meeting with LCLE staff members Ms. Kathy Guidry and Ms. Crystal Foster, it was recommended that the Bossier Sheriff's Office create a new separate program, specifically for court-ordered juveniles.

In December 2012, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office submitted a JABG application for the Bossier Youth Diversion Program. While this program was created similar to the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program, it also would incorporate "Character Counts" and "The Great Body Shop," both evidence-based curriculums recommended by Ms. Kathy Guidry. This program would be for court-ordered juveniles only and also has the support of the Bossier Parish School Board, 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court, 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney, Bossier City Court, Bossier City Police Department and the Office of Youth Development Juvenile Probation.

In correspondence between Ms. Kathy Guidry and Major David Miller with the Bossier Sheriff's Office, the LCLE requested, at the direction of Ms. Shelly Langguth with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Civil Rights, that the Bossier Sheriff's Office "NOT include prayer as part of the Diversion program. Any prayer, even if voluntary, needs to be separate in time or location from the Diversion Program activities." On February 22, 2013, Major Miller responded by email, "In response to the prayer issue, the time that was offered for prayer was optional for all of the kids. It was led by any child that wanted to volunteer and if there wasn't a volunteer, it became a few moments of silence." On March 7, 2013, Ms. Kathy Guidry sent another email to Major Miller at the direction of Ms. Shelly Langguth requesting an official letter, "...signed by the Sheriff, which states that there will be no prayer activities conducted during the Diversion program..." Ms. Kathy Guidry states, "We will not be able to issue an award until this letter is received." At that time, I had enough of the bureaucratic nonsense and made the decision to withdraw the grant request.

On February 6, 2013, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office submitted a Program Plan Worksheet requesting the one-time Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention funds available for the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program. On May 8, 2013, Major David Miller received an email from Ms. Kathy Guidry stating, "The Program Plan Worksheet's project summary outlines the same activities that were previously funded with JABG funds that ended December 31, 2012. OJJDP had concerns and recommended that you use any future funds for another program. The JJDP Advisory Board was advised the OJJDP and OCR's issues surrounding the Boot Camp Program and recommended approving the new project because the application stated that the funds would be used for another program separate from the Young Marines curriculum. At the February 21, 2013, the Commission approved your application. When the Office for Civil Rights requested a letter from the Sheriff's office to address the prayer activity, the Sheriff's Office decided to not accept the \$15,000 award. Based on the OJJDP and OCR concerns surrounding the Boot Camp curriculum, the JJDP Advisory Board will need to be advised that this allocation cannot be recommended to the Commission at the September meeting."

On November 28, 2012, Ms. Kathy Guidry sent the following email, "As discussed during our meeting, the Office for Civil Rights did not find that the agency violated the civil rights, Equal Treatment Regulations, regarding any inherently religious activities." Somewhere between November 28, 2012 and February 2013, the Office of Civil Rights changed their opinion on the "inherently religious activities."

At this time, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office has been denied funding by the LCLE for both the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program and the Bossier Youth Diversion Program due to prayer and the mention of God in the programs. This matter is of great importance to me, not because of funding for these programs, but for the principle of this issue. My office is fortunate enough to have the resources to provide important programs such as these when funding is denied. My concern is that other agencies may be dependent on these funds and therefore agree to these unacceptable terms in order to receive funding.

This is an appalling situation where someone at the Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights, in Washington, D.C. could, would and did go to great lengths to prevent even the mere mention of God in any way to the youth in these programs.

As Sheriff of Bossier Parish, I will never sign the requested letter preventing these "inherently religious activities" from being a part of our programs.

I think this is an area where compromise is not an option and request it be given your prompt attention.

Sincerely,  
Julian C. Whittington

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julian C. Whittington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Bossier Sheriff

Cc: Attorney General James "Buddy" Caldwell  
Senator Mary Landrieu  
Senator David Vitter  
Congressman John Fleming, M.D.  
Senator Robert Adley, 36<sup>th</sup> District  
Senator Barrow Peacock, 37<sup>th</sup> District  
Representative Henry Burns, 9<sup>th</sup> District  
Representative Jeff Thompson, 8<sup>th</sup> District  
Representative Roy Burrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Representative Thomas Carmody, Jr., 6<sup>th</sup> District  
Representative James Morris, 1<sup>st</sup> District  
Representative H. Eugene Reynolds, 10<sup>th</sup> District

Sheriff Jeff Wiley, Chairman, Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement  
Joey Watson, Executive Director, Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement  
Sheriff Steve Prator, Chairman, Northwest Law Enforcement Planning Council  
Ken Walker, Executive Director, Red River Delta / Northwest Law Enforcement Planning Council  
Michael Ranatza, Executive Director, Louisiana Sheriff's Association  
All Louisiana Sheriffs  
DC Machen, Superintendent, Bossier Parish School Board  
Shane McWilliams, Chief of Police, Bossier City  
J. Schuyler Marvin, 26<sup>th</sup> District Attorney  
Honorable Ford Stinson, Jr. 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court  
Honorable Tommy Wilson, Bossier City Court