

**“We the People of the State of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom....”**

(Preamble to the Calif. Constitution)

On Thursday Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of Murrieta residents joined together with local pastor Tim Thompson to ask the Murrieta school board to declare Murrieta to be our state’s first “Sanctuary School District.” This action would exempt Murrieta public schools from adopting the new California Healthy Youth Act and from being legally required to give students permission to go off campus without their parents’ consent to receive hormone therapy or to have an abortion. These parents acknowledged their Constitutional right of religious freedom, their right to teach their children traditional moral values intrinsic to their Christian faith, which is being violated by these state mandates.

The California Healthy Youth Act is a sexual education curriculum which teaches students that they have the right to choose their own gender, to engage in homosexual and pre-marital sex, and to have an abortion or hormone therapy without their parents’ knowledge or consent. The Christian faith mandates that parents teach the opposite to their children: sex is for a man and a woman after marriage, gender is determined by God at birth and cannot be changed, and life begins at conception so an abortion kills an innocent human being. California’s public schools are either intentionally or unintentionally prohibiting the religious freedom of Christian parents to teach Biblical moral values to their children.

The Murrieta school board did not take action on the parents’ proposal because of the following legal argument made by the board’s attorney: “The board has to follow existing law which is an important understanding. The state constitution says the board members will have allegiance to the state constitution and the federal constitution” (“Parents in So. Cal. Demand School Board Declare District a Sanctuary Community for Parental Rights” *Calif. Globe*, Michelle Mears). The attorney correctly reminded board members of their duty to obey our constitutions and existing laws, however, he did not remind them of an essential constitutional right guaranteed to these parents which is undermined by the California Healthy Youth Act.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof....,” and Section 4 of the California Constitution states: “Free exercise and enjoyment of religion without discrimination or preference are guaranteed. This liberty does not excuse acts that are licentious or inconsistent with the peace and safety of the state.” The California constitutional guarantee to religious freedom is similar to the one provided for in the U.S. Constitution with an interesting additional statement: “This liberty does not excuse acts that are licentious or inconsistent with the peace and safety of the state.” The guarantee to religious freedom does not extend to “licentious” acts, meaning acts “lacking moral restraint, especially in sexual conduct” (from *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition). The essential conflict between the Murrieta parents and the public schools is that the parents want their children to learn moral restraints while the public schools are teaching students that “licentious” behavior is acceptable: which side is more in line with our Constitutional guarantee of religious freedom?

It is encouraging to see these parents confront the school board on behalf of their children: public schools should not teach students that traditional and Biblical morals should be rejected in favor of permissive or licentious lifestyles. This is a debate parents can win if we continue in prayer and in standing for the truth: our Constitution protects the right of Christian parents to freely exercise their religion in the moral instruction of their children.

*“...The weapons we fight with... have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).*