



**BP 2370      Invocations at Board Meetings**

Legislative bodies in the United States of America have historically maintained a tradition of solemnizing those proceedings by allowing for an opening prayer with the intent to imbue them with a seriousness, gravity and thoughtfulness that befits important deliberative proceedings while at the same time, respecting individuals' personal religious beliefs or lack thereof. Accordingly, the following provisions shall govern invocations at Board meetings.

1. In order to lend gravity and solemnness to the proceedings of the Board of Trustees ("Board"), it is the policy of the Victor Valley Community College District ("District") to allow for an invocation or prayer (hereinafter "Invocation") to be offered for the benefit of the Board and the community.
2. The Invocation shall be held at the beginning of the meeting immediately before or after the pledge of allegiance and shall not be listed or recognized as an agenda item for the meeting so that it will be clear the Invocation is not considered a part of the public business of the Board. The Invocation shall not exceed three (3) minutes in length.
3. No member of the Board, District employee or any other person in attendance at the meeting shall be required to participate in the Invocation.
4. The Invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by a member of the clergy, or a religious or spiritual leader in the District's geographical jurisdiction. To ensure that such persons (the "Invocational Speakers") are selected from a wide pool of eligible individuals, on a rotating basis, the Invocational Speaker shall be selected according to the following procedure:
  - a. The Secretary of the Board shall compile and maintain a database (the "Congregations List") of religious and spiritual groups with an established presence in the District's geographic jurisdiction.
  - b. The Congregations List shall be compiled by referencing the listing for "churches," "congregations," or other religious assemblies in the annual Yellow Pages® phone book(s) published in the District's geographical jurisdiction, research from the Internet, and consultation with the local chambers of commerce. All religious congregations with an established presence in the communities that comprise the District's geographical jurisdiction are eligible to



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be included in the Congregations List, and any such congregation can confirm its inclusion by specific written request to the Secretary of the Board.

- c. The Congregations List shall also include the name and contact information of any chaplain who serves one or more of the fire departments or law enforcement agencies within the District's geographical jurisdiction or any nearby military facilities.
- d. The Congregations List shall be updated by reasonable efforts of the Secretary of the Board, in November of each calendar year.
- e. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Policy, and on or about December 1 of each calendar year thereafter, the Secretary of the Board shall mail an invitation addressed to the "religious leader" of each congregation listed on the Congregations List and the individual chaplains on the Congregations List.
- f. The invitation shall be dated at the top of the page, signed by the Secretary of the Board at the bottom of the page, and read as follows:

*Dear Religious Leader,*

*It is the policy of the Victor Valley Community College District to invite members of the local spiritual community to voluntarily offer a prayer before the beginning of its meetings for the benefit and blessing of the Board of Trustees. As a leader of a religious congregation with an established presence in one of the communities served by the District, you are eligible to offer this important service at an upcoming meeting of the Board of Trustees.*

*If you are willing to assist the District in this regard, please send a written reply at your earliest convenience to the Secretary of the Board at the address included on this letterhead, or by email to [insert current email address of Secretary of the Board or designee]. Clergy are scheduled on a first-come, first-served or other random basis. The dates of the Trustees' scheduled meetings for the upcoming year are included with this letter.*

*If you have a preference among the dates, please state that request in your written reply.*



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*This opportunity is voluntary and you are free to offer the invocation according to the dictates of your own conscience. To maintain a spirit of respect and ecumenism, the Board requests only that the prayer opportunity not be exploited as an effort to convert others to the particular faith of the invitational speaker, nor to disparage any faith or belief different than that of the invitational speaker.*

*On behalf of the Victor Valley Community College District, I thank you in advance for considering this invitation.*

*Sincerely,  
Secretary of the Board of Trustees*

- g. As provided in paragraph 6 (below) and, as the invitation letter indicates, prospective Invitational Speakers shall be scheduled on a first-come, first-served or other random basis to deliver the Invocation.
  - h. If the selected Invitational Speaker does not appear at the scheduled meeting, or if no Invitational Speaker has volunteered for a particular meeting, the Board President may ask for a volunteer from among the Board of Trustees or the audience to deliver the invocation. If none of those individuals is prepared to deliver an Invocation, the Clerk may read a brief non-sectarian Invocation.
5. No Invitational Speaker shall be compensated for his/her/their service.
  6. The Secretary of the Board shall make every reasonable effort to ensure that a variety of eligible Invitational Speakers are scheduled for the Board meetings. In any event, no Invitational Speaker shall be scheduled to offer a prayer at consecutive meetings for the Board, or at more than three (3) Board meetings during any calendar year.
  7. Neither the Board nor the Secretary of the Board shall engage in any prior inquiry, review of, or involvement in, the content of any Invocation to be offered by an Invitational Speaker.
  8. Shortly before the opening gavel that officially begins the meeting and the agenda/business of the public, the Board Chair shall introduce the Invitational Speaker and the person selected to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and invite only those who wish to do so to stand for those observances with the Board.
  9. This Policy shall be intended for all District Board meetings and District Board subcommittee meetings.



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10. This Policy is not intended, and shall not be implemented or construed in any way to affiliate the Board with, nor express the District's preference for, any faith or religious denomination. Rather, this Policy is intended to acknowledge and express the District's respect for the diversity of religious denominations and faiths represented and practiced among the citizens within the geographical area served by the District.

**References:**

- Town of Greece v. Galloway (2014) 134 S. Ct. 1811;
- Rubin v. City of Lancaster (2011) 802 F. Supp. 2d 1107