

# Tory MP introduces amendment to make council prayers compulsory

Posted: Thu, 15th Jan 2015

Conservative MP Philip Davies has introduced an amendment to the Local Government (Religious etc. Observances) Bill that would make prayers compulsory at the start of local authority meetings.

Davies' amendment would alter the first clause of the bill so that it would read, "the business at a meeting of a local authority in England shall include time for (a) prayers or other religious observance, or (b) observance connected with a religious or philosophical belief."

Currently, the bill says that authorities "may" include time for prayers, leaving the decision to local authorities to decide. The NSS opposes the bill in its current form because the end result would still be prayers being imposed at the start of meetings by a majority of councillors on the minority.

The NSS argues that if councillors wish to pray before meetings they should simply do so before the official business of local authority meetings begins.

This amendment, however, would create a statutory obligation on local authorities to include time for prayers.

Philip Davies is known for a conservative voting record, he voted "very strongly against" equal gay rights and same-sex marriage.

Fellow Conservative MP Edward Leigh has also moved to introduce a clause requiring councils to "keep in mind the pre-eminence of the Judaeo-Christian tradition as the historical foundations of the United Kingdom" when religious observances are held.

In the recent committee stage debate on the bill, Jake Berry MP, who is believed to have introduced the Private Member's Bill at the behest of Eric Pickles and the Department for Local Government, lauded the bill for providing the "freedom to pray and to hold prayers at the start of council meetings, should that local authority wish to do so."

Mr Berry said faith was an "important part of national life in Britain" and that his Bill was necessary to meet "an aggressive and unwelcome secular attack on our core British values."

In addition to local council meetings, the Bill seeks to make provision for the inclusion of prayers at meetings of other local authorities bodies such as Transport for London, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, joint waste authorities and internal drainage boards.

Stephen Evans, NSS campaigns manager, said: "Clearly there should be no compulsion in religion, and in a secular, pluralistic society, there can be no justification for allowing Christians, or indeed any other religious group, the ability to assert their supremacy over other religious groups or over non-religious people, by making their religious observances part of the formal business of local council meetings"

"Usually, such a lamentable Private Members' Bill would fall by the wayside, but with the Government and opposition frontbenches supporting it, this one looks set to clear it House of

Commons stage, despite receiving very little in the way of scrutiny."

**Find out more about this Bill [here](#). The full NSS briefing on the Bill can be read [here](#)**

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Government prayers](#)

## Related Campaigns

- 

### [End prayers in parliament and councils](#)

Prayers aren't government business.

[Read More](#)

## Related Articles

### [Majority of public support removing Isle of Man bishop's vote](#)

Most Manx residents back removing prayers and votes for clerics from parliament. [Read More »](#)

### [End prayers in House of Commons, NSS urges Speaker](#)

Speaker should use his position to end symbolic Church of England privilege in Parliament, NSS says. [Read More »](#)

### [Peer calls for more secular democracy in RE debate](#)

Lord Warner challenges prayers in parliament and schools, bishops' bench, and faith schools. [Read More »](#)

## **NSS welcomes council decision to replace prayers at meetings**

The National Secular Society has welcomed a council's decision to replace prayers at meetings with a 'moment of contemplation'.... [Read More »](#)

## **Tackling CofE privilege unites Anglicans and atheists at NSS event**

Politicians and priests united to challenge Church of England privileges at a National Secular Society event in parliament... [Read More »](#)