



POLICY REGARDING INVOCATIONS AT MEETINGS OF THE TULARE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1. To solemnize the proceedings of the Board of Supervisors, it is the policy of the Board of Supervisors to allow for an invocation to be offered at its meetings for the benefit of the Board of Supervisors and the community.

2. The invocation shall take place at the beginning, prior to the flag salute of the Board of Supervisors' meeting.

3. No member of the Board of Supervisors or County employee or any other person in attendance at the meeting shall be required to participate in any invocation that is offered.

4. The invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by a religious leader in the County of Tulare or any member of the public who sends a request to the Clerk of the Board to be scheduled. To ensure that such person, known as "the invitational speaker," is selected from a wide representation of faiths whether secular or non-secular, the invitational speaker shall be selected according to the following procedure:

- a. All religious organizations or persons with any ideology, doctrine, belief, or interest are eligible to register to be an invitational speaker, and any such organization or person can confirm the organization or person's inclusion by specific written request to the Clerk of the Board.
- b. The Clerk of the Board shall maintain and update the schedule of invitational speakers.
- c. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this policy, and on or about December 1st of each calendar year thereafter, the Clerk of the Board shall publish an advertisement inviting anyone interested in leading an invocation to register for meetings.
- d. The advertisement shall contain a summary of the procedures for registering to provide and delivering invocations at scheduled Board meetings. The advertisement shall substantively comply with the attached sample invitation.
- e. Invitational speakers shall be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve, or other random basis to deliver the invocation. The registration period for each meeting date will close at 12:00 p.m. on the Thursday before that meeting date.
- f. Invocations shall not exceed one and a half minutes in length.
- g. Invitational speakers who are unable to make their scheduled meeting should notify the Clerk of the Board of their cancellation 7 days before their meeting date.
- h. Scheduled invitational speakers shall check in with the Clerk of the Board at least 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time of their meeting date. If the selected invitational speaker does not check in at least 15 minutes before the start of the meeting, the Board of Supervisors shall observe a moment of silence.

5. No invitational speaker shall receive compensation for this service. County employees, contractors, or volunteers who have registered to lead an invocation shall not count time spent for providing this service as compensable time.

6. Invitational speakers must observe practices that do not endanger the health and safety of those present during the invocation. This includes, but is not limited to, refraining from any of the following during the invocation:

- a. Consuming intoxicating beverages, marijuana, or illegal substances of any kind;
- b. Smoking or using a device that emits smoke;
- c. Engaging in activities that may increase the likelihood of those present coming into contact with blood or other potentially infected or harmful bodily fluid or materials, whether human or animal;
- d. Using any offensive or harmful fragrances, scents, or sprays; or
- e. Using any sharp or pointed objects deemed dangerous or harmful, as determined by the Board of Supervisors' security team.

7. The Clerk of the Board shall make every reasonable effort to ensure that a variety of eligible invitational speakers are scheduled for the Board of Supervisors' meetings. In any event, no invitational speaker shall be scheduled to offer an invocation at consecutive meetings of the Board of Supervisors, or at more than three (3) Board of Supervisors' meetings in any calendar year.

8. Dates, times, and locations of Board meetings may be changed at any time as approved by the Board of Supervisors. Should the Board of Supervisors cancel any meeting for which invitational speakers have been scheduled, that invitational speaker may be scheduled for the next available meeting. An invitational speaker that is scheduled for more than one meeting may be moved so that the invitational speaker whose scheduled meeting was canceled by the Board of Supervisors may be heard.

9. Neither the Board of Supervisors nor the Clerk 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. Speakers whose invocations denigrate other religions or groups, threaten damnation, or seek to convert non-adherents will not be permitted to lead invocations at future meetings. The Board, by a majority vote, can ban speakers who flagrantly or repeatedly violate this provision.

10. Only those who wish to do so may stand for the pronouncement of the invocation. There is absolutely no requirement for participation in the invocation by any member of the Board of Supervisors, County employees, or member of the public.

11. This policy is not intended and shall not be implemented or construed in any way, to affiliate the Board of Supervisors with, nor express the Board of Supervisors' preference for, any faith or religious denomination. Rather, this policy is intended to acknowledge and express the Board of Supervisors' respect for the diversity of beliefs and faiths represented and practiced among the residents of Tulare County.