

INVOCATION POLICY

- 1.) The purpose of this policy is to solemnize the formal meetings of the County Commission by allowing an invocation to be offered at the start of its meetings. In so doing, the Commission also wishes to express its respect for the diversity of religious practice and belief in the County. No invocation shall be offered at a meeting of the County Commission except in accordance with this policy.
- 2.) No person in attendance at any such meeting shall be required to participate in any invocation that is offered in any way, including being asked by any member of the Commission or any employee of the County to rise or bow their heads while the invocation is being offered. However, the same standards of public decorum that are observed at Commission meetings shall be observed during prayers or invocations.
- 3.) The invocation may be given, if given at all, by a volunteer from the Franklin County community. The invocation speaker for each formal meeting of the County Commission shall be determined in the following manner:
 - a.) Volunteers shall sign up for the opportunity to present the invocation at a given meeting by contacting the Secretary to the County Commission no earlier than the 1st of the preceding month nor later than the 15th of the month preceding the month in which the volunteer desires to speak, for example, if a speaker desires to provide an invocation during September, 2012, he or she must sign up between August 1, 2012 and August 15, 2012 for the desired date.
 - b.) No questions will be asked nor shall any information be sought with regard to any volunteer's religious preference.
 - c.) Any person interested in providing an invocation shall notify the Secretary to the County Commission by phone or e-mail in accordance with the time line set forth above. Any person who wants to volunteer must provide to the Commission Secretary the following: name, phone number, e-mail address and the date upon which the person desires to provide the invocation. If more than one (1) person desires to provide an invocation on a given day, the names of all who so desire shall be placed in a box and a speaker for such day shall be selected by lot. If only one (1) speaker signs up for a given day such person shall be selected to provide the invocation provided that such person complies in all other respects with this policy. Standing requests shall not be permitted. The drawing with respect to any date for which there are multiple volunteers shall be conducted by the Secretary to the County Commission in the presence of one other unbiased witness selected by the Secretary on the first business day immediately following the due date for submissions.

- d.) Lists of scheduled volunteers shall only be kept for the then current month.
- 4.) No person who gives an invocation shall be compensated for his or her service nor shall any person be compensated for expenses.
 - 5.) No invitational speaker shall be permitted to give the prayer or invocation at consecutive meetings or at more than one meeting during any month.
 - 6.) The Commission shall not review the content of the invocation that any invitational speaker might offer. If inquiries are made by an invitational speaker concerning the contents of the invocation, he or she shall be told that the invocation should not proselytize or make any effort to convert anyone present to a particular faith and should not disparage any faith. If any speaker attempts to use the opportunity to provide an invocation to proselytize or convert attendees to a particular faith, such speaker shall be banned from giving the invocation in the future.
 - 7.) Prior to a Commission meeting at which an invocation is to be offered, a Commissioner shall introduce the invitational speaker but shall not ask any person in attendance to rise or bow their heads or otherwise participate in the prayer or invocation.
 - 8.) At those Commission meetings where an invitational leader is not present, the Commission may observe a moment of silence. If no speaker for a given formal meeting has signed up in advance, no invocation shall be presented at such meeting. Under no circumstances shall volunteers to provide an invocation be solicited or permitted from those in attendance if no speaker has signed up in advance. If a speaker has signed up but is not present it shall be deemed that no one has signed up for such meeting.
 - 9.) The invocation shall not be listed on the agenda of the Commission meeting and should not be considered an official part of the Commission's business.
 - 10.) Invocations shall be no longer than two (2) minutes.
 - 11.) The Presiding Commissioner or the Commissioner presiding over a given meeting shall have the authority to interrupt and/or stop any speaker from continuing if it is believed that the speaker is violating this policy. At all times this policy shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the controlling federal and/or state law governing the topic of public invocations.
 - 12.) The County Commission shall have the authority to cease the practice of allowing invocations without notice if it determines that doing so is in the best interest of Franklin County.