

Title: **School board moves to reinstate Lord's Prayer**
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School board moves to reinstate Lord's Prayer

Despite the threat of a lawsuit, the Berkeley County school board is moving to reinstate saying the Lord's Prayer before its meetings. The board gave initial approval Tuesday after dropping the use of the prayer earlier this year. The board has been using a moment of silence instead. State Sen. Larry Grooms sent the board a letter signed by 50 state lawmakers citing a 2014 U.S. Supreme Court decision reaffirming the right to pray at public meetings. Gov. Nikki Haley last month signed a state law allowing school boards the right to open meetings with prayer. Americans United for Separation of Church and State wrote members in June and again Monday warning that using the prayer is unconstitutional.

— *Post and Courier*

Title: **Berkeley Co. school board moves to reinstate prayer**
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STATE NEWS IN BRIEF

Berkeley Co. school board moves to reinstate prayer

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONCK'S CORNER —
Despite the threat of a lawsuit, the Berkeley County school board is moving to reinstate prayer before its meetings.

The Post and Courier of Charleston reports the school board gave initial approval to a new policy Tuesday after dropping the use of the Lord's Prayer earlier this year. The board has been using a moment of silence instead.

State Sen. Larry Grooms sent the board a letter signed by 50 state lawmakers citing a 2014 U.S. Supreme Court decision reaffirming the right to pray at public meetings. Gov. Nikki Haley last month signed a state law allowing school boards the right to open meetings with prayer.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State wrote members in June and again Monday warning that using the prayer is unconstitutional.

"I appreciate everyone's hard work on working

through this policy in light of the threats we've gotten," said board member Mac McQuillin, a lawyer.

The board's new policy calls for future invocations to be nonsectarian and non-denominational. It also states the prayer cannot favor or criticize any faith.

Title: **County awarded money for body cams**
 Author: BY TRIPP GIRARDEAU tgirardeau@aikenstandard.com
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County awarded money for body cams

Aiken confirms receipt of \$142K from state funds

BY TRIPP GIRARDEAU
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The Aiken County administrator announced this week the state has awarded grant money for body cameras for the Aiken County Sheriff's Office.

County Administrator Clay Killian said Tuesday the state awarded Ai-

ken County with \$142,268 for body cams on Aug. 1. He said he received confirmation from the state Tuesday morning.

"This is good," Killian said. "With this grant we should be able to use it with money

budgeted by the County to match the estimate requested by the Sheriff's Office."

The Aiken County Sheriff's Office requested \$182,850 for body cameras

in the next fiscal year, with a goal of getting approximately 135 units for the agency, said Aiken County Sheriff Michael Hunt.

"We are satisfied with what we got from the state," Hunt said. "Now we are going to take that money and get it matched by the County Council so that every uniformed deputy in the street will have a camera."

The measure comes after Gov. Nikki Haley signed a requirement into law in 2015 that all state law enforcement agencies had to implement body cams

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BODY

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following the shooting death of unarmed motorist Walter Scott. Scott was fatally shot by former North Charleston police officer Michael Slager in April 2015. Slager has since been charged with murder.

Haley required agencies to create a policy for which officers will wear them, when they should and should not be recording and how videos are stored.

In June, The Associated Press

reported the state's Public Safety Coordinating Council was set to begin distributing money to all of the more than 160 agencies that applied for funding. Notifications were planned to be sent out with the money after the start of the fiscal year in July.

Sen. Greg Hembree, a member of the council, told the *Aiken Standard* in June, the state had requests from 168 agencies and was able to fund at least partially what was submitted. Requests were made for

hardware and maintenance and some agencies requested both.

The state allocated \$5.8 million for the cameras and materials, AP reported.

Hembree said the council knew the money was not going to be sufficient, so what it decided, as a matter of policy, was to fund small agencies at 100 percent, middle-sized at 75 percent and larger agencies at 50 percent.

Large agencies have a little more flexibility and options like sharing cameras, he said.

"Most times the small agencies don't have the resources to get into this kind of expenditure or program on their own," Hembree said. "We're trying to get the cameras in as many hands as possible."

Reimbursement is allowed under the statute, according to Hembree. He said the reason was because the council wanted agencies that wanted to participate in the program to not be discouraged and to begin purchasing their cameras. He hopes the state can fully fund

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them and said there is a line item in the state's budget for the program that could be added to.

Capt. Eric Abdullah, with the Aiken County Sheriff's Office, said the agency will now resubmit its request for the body cameras and the storage system from the company the Sheriff's Office picked in order to get a new quote.

Hunt said the agency settled on Digital Ally Inc. as the company from which it will get its new equipment, after months of testing different kinds of body cams from different companies.

"We decided on (Digital Ally) because the body cams will be compatible with our in-car video cameras we already have installed in the patrol cars," Hunt said.

Killian said in order to buy 135 units, which is the goal of

the Sheriff's Office, the agency is looking to spend around \$1,300 per camera. However, he said that doesn't factor in the cost of the storage system and maintenance system that also must be implemented.

A storage system must be installed in order to save and document the hours of footage the body cameras will record.

"Body cameras are going to protect our officers and our citizens, plus it's going to help us provide better evidence to the solicitor," Hunt said.

Abdullah said the agency has been testing different units over the past few months and some deputies already have body cameras implemented.

Aiken Department of Public Safety

The Aiken Department Public Safety also has been using body cameras, which are switched out among the officers so that every officer working on patrol has a body cam, said Lt. Ben Harm with Aiken Public Safety.

Chief Charles Barranco said the Aiken City Council budgeted \$52,000 over the past two years so the agency could implement the units it is currently using. He said the state will eventually reimburse the city for all of the money given to fund Public Safety's cameras.

Harm said Public Safety has applied for a federal grant of \$50,000, which has not yet been awarded.

"If we get the federal grant, we will get more body cameras so that every officer

on the force will have their own," Harm said.

Chief Barranco said the federal grant also would allow the agency to make upgrades with all of its equipment.

"The body cameras have been working out great and have been very useful in the field – the battery life has been the only issue that we have some problems with," Barranco said. "We would add enhancement to the cameras with the federal money so the equipment would have a longer battery life."

Tripp Girardeau is the crime and courts reporter with the *Aiken Standard*. Follow him on Twitter at @trippgirardeau. **Christina Cleveland** contributed to this report.



Killian



STAFF PHOTO BY TRIPP GIRARDEAU

The state awarded Aiken County more than \$142,000 for body cameras on Aug. 1 for the Aiken County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Michael Hunt said they will now get a body cam for every uniformed officer on the street.