

City Council Policy/Procedure

Subject: **City Council Meetings; Invocation**

Reference: Minute Order 01/22/2013

Invocation

The Irvine City Council has intermittently included an invocation on the City Council meeting agendas. In 2002, the California Court of Appeal ruled that certain invocations—those that constitute sectarian prayer—violate the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution; and the California Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court denied requests to hear the case. (*Rubin v. City of Burbank* (2002) 101 Cal. App. 4th 1194.) The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that invocations comply with the law so that we retain the right to open public meetings with words of inspiration and wisdom.

The City Council believes that the purpose of an invocation is to recognize the role that freedom of religion has played in the history of our country and the contribution that religious groups make to the quality of life in our community—and to neither promote nor disparage any denomination or particular religious belief. The City Council is confident that anyone who agrees to give an invocation consistent with this Policy will offer words that respect the laws and institutions that protect the freedoms that we enjoy.

The City Council has determined that invocations that comply with the following guidelines are consistent with the *Rubin* decision.

1. The tone, tenor and content of the invocation would not, to a reasonable person, be considered as advancing or disparaging a specific religion.
2. The invocation does not refer to terms associated with a specific religion, sect or deity such as “Jesus Christ,” “Allah” or “Our Father in Heaven.”
3. The invocation does not refer to a particular religious holiday, significant dates, holy day or religious event.
4. The person giving the invocation does not read or quote from any sectarian book, doctrine or material.

The City Clerk shall send a letter to each person who has agreed to give an invocation expressing the City Council’s appreciation for volunteering and confirming his/her intention to offer an invocation that is fully consistent with this Policy.