

CASE SUMMARIES

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Federal Appellate Case

Mandatory Attendance of Sheriffs at Presentations by Christian Group Unconstitutional.

In [*Milwaukee Deputy Sheriff's Ass'n v. Clarke*](#), 588 F.3d 523 (7th Cir. 2009), a county sheriff invited a Christian support group for law enforcement officials to make a presentation at the sheriff's department leadership conference. Attendance was mandatory for all deputies who held the rank of sergeant or above. Just before the group's presentation, the sheriff announced that he would be making promotions to the rank of captain and distributed literature listing the qualities a leader should look for in his inner-circle, including "people of faith." 588 F.3d at 525. During the presentation, the support group quoted bible verses, and asserted that government employees in authority were "ministers of God assigned to promote good and punish evil." *Id.* After the conference, the group was invited to present at department roll calls, attendance at which was mandatory for all deputies. The group presented at 16 roll calls during a seven-day period. After complaining internally, two sheriff's deputies and their union sued the department. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit held that the sheriff's conduct created an impermissible appearance of endorsement of religion that violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. In so doing, the court made clear that it was not holding that religiously affiliated groups are always constitutionally barred from working with or speaking to government employees. However, a government official cannot invite a religious group to proselytize on numerous occasions at mandatory meetings of government employees.