

Edinburgh Secular Society

Challenging religious privilege

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Chair

David Lord
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PE1487/NN

David Stewart MSP
Convener, Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
CC Clerk of Public Petitions Committee

By email to petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Monday 27 January 2014

Dear Mr Stewart

PE01487 – Religious Observance in schools

We are aware from press reports of an initiative by the Humanist Society of Scotland (HSS) and the Church of Scotland (CoS) with regards to the above petition submitted on behalf of the Scottish Secular Society (SSS) that is due to be heard on Tuesday, 28 January 2014.

We note that the papers for the committee meeting are, unusually, not yet posted on the website as of Saturday, 25 January and it appears the HSS/CoS intervention will be raised with the committee on 28 January.

We consider that it would be unfair to the SSS if this initiative superseded full consideration of their petition. The Committee should ensure that the SSS petition gets full consideration and that any other proposals by external bodies be the subject of separate considerations which also includes opportunities for public consultation and reaction.

Indeed, Edinburgh Secular Society submitted a written response to the petition; however the joint HSS/CoS initiative fundamentally changes the intention of the petition. To prevent ourselves, or other bodies, the opportunity to respond to such significant changes would disadvantage us and undermine the democratic principles that underpin the working of the Public Petitions Committee.

Perhaps the CoS and HSS might like to raise their own petition on the matter.

Should you require further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact the Society at the above email address.

Colin Emerson
Chair Edinburgh Secular Society