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Lawsuit disputes court's emblem

'Religious' art faces challenge

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SAN FRANCISCO - The federal appeals court that ruled the Pledge of Allegiance was an unconstitutional endorsement of religion is being sued for displaying the Ten Commandments on its seal and courthouses.

The case was brought by an attorney who was admitted to practice before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in June. In his lawsuit against the San Francisco-based court, Ryan Donlon said the certificate admitting him contains the court's seal that unlawfully contains what he believes is a tablet representing the Ten Commandments.

Cathy Catterson, the court's clerk, said the seal highlights a woman, known as the "Majesty of the Law" who is reading a large book. At her feet is a tablet with 10 unreadable lines on it or what Donlon believes is the Ten Commandments.

Catterson said the tablet has "the same shape" as the Ten Commandments' tablet but "you can't read the text of it."

She said the drawing became the court's seal decades ago and is a depiction of a tile mosaic in one of the century-old courthouse's ornate courtrooms.

In 2002, the Appeals Court sided with an atheist father who challenged the words "under God" in the pledge, ruling that the pledge that public-school children recite each day was an unconstitutional endorsement of religion. The U.S. Supreme Court later dismissed the case.

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