

# Arizona Daily Star

## Suit: School God ban includes 'Declaration'

*REUTERS*

LOS ANGELES - A teacher says he has been barred by his school from giving students documents from U.S. history that refer to God - including the Declaration of Independence.

Steven Williams, a fifth-grade teacher at Stevens Creek School in the San Francisco Bay area suburb of Cupertino, sued for discrimination Monday, contending he had been singled out for censorship by Principal Patricia Vidmar because he is a Christian.

"It's a fact of American history that our founders were religious men, and to hide this fact from young fifth-graders in the name of political correctness is outrageous and shameful," said Williams' attorney, Terry Thompson.

"Williams wants to teach his students the true history of our country," he said. "There is nothing in the Establishment Clause (of the U.S. Constitution) that prohibits a teacher from showing students the Declaration of Independence."

Vidmar could not be reached for comment on the lawsuit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in San Jose and claims violations of Williams' rights to free speech under the First Amendment.

Phyllis Vogel, assistant superintendent for the Cupertino Unified School District, said the lawsuit had been forwarded to a staff attorney. She would not comment further.

Williams asserts in the lawsuit that since May, he has been required to submit all of his lesson plans and supplemental handouts to Vidmar for approval, and that the principal will not permit him to use any that contain references to God or Christianity.

Among the materials she has rejected, according to Williams, are excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, George Washington's journal, John Adams' diary, Samuel Adams' "The Rights of the Colonists" and William Penn's "The Frame of Government of Pennsylvania."

"The principal seems to be systematically censoring material that refers to Christianity, and it is pure discrimination," Thompson said.