



## Straight Talk

by Muriel Sluyter

## The Forest Service in the Soup

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Greetings, Gentle Reader,

First, let's look at the suit brought by an atheist to have the Pledge of Allegiance declared unconstitutional, because of the words "under God." He said he was raising his daughter as an atheist, and she was being traumatized by other children's standing up and reciting the pledge. Sure enough, a goofy judge in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals obliged him and agreed that the pledge was harming his daughter.

Now, we find out that he's not raising his daughter; he doesn't have custody; he never married her mother. The child is a Christian, not an atheist; her mother teaches Sunday school, and the little girl loves to recite the pledge!

Is that weird, or what? How did the guy think he could get away with such a phony story in today's news-obsessed climate?

Now, let's look at the Forest Service; it is catching so much flak that I am beginning to feel sorry for them. I can't help sympathizing with anyone who is in that much trouble, so I am going to tell their side of it. According to our newspaper, Dale Bosworth, head guy in the soup, blames conflicting federal laws and legal challenges by environmentalists for the gridlock he is fighting. He says he has about 5,000 suits pending at this time. He cited a crumbling (literally) bridge in Michigan, repair on which was begun in 1995, but stopped by a suit in 1998. They hope construction will begin in 2005. By then environmentalists will have delayed badly needed repairs for 10 years.

According to Mike Soraghan in the July 10 *Denver Post*, "Nearly half of the Forest Service's attempts to cut the underbrush that fuels catastrophic wildfires... have been delayed by environmental appeals" Out of 326 thinning projects planned, 155 (48 percent) were appealed. He says this report fuels a "high-stakes battle over how the forest are being managed — for timber or for critters." The Forest Service released these numbers "to refute a report cited repeatedly by environmentalists that says they've appealed only 1 percent of thinning projects."

Congressman Scott McInnis says, "For those who have

spent the last several weeks downplaying the impact of appeals and litigation on forest management, this report is a bucket of cold water in the face... The American people can expect a decades-long cycle of destructive wildfires if this crusade against forest management continues."

William Perry Pendley of the Mountain States Legal Foundation wrote a great book called "War on the West," after wildfires burned so much of Yellowstone National Park. It's not just about fires, but his explanation of what kind of damage those fires do is exceptional.

He also addressed suits by environmentalists. He mentioned one filed against a local cattleman by a hiker, from Durango if I recall correctly, whose tender sensibilities were assaulted by the presence of a cowpie (sorry, we have always called them that) on the hiking trail. He was so traumatized he ran right out and filed a lawsuit. A real manly sort, that one. Hopefully he keeps smelling salts with him to help him deal with the more trying vicissitudes of life. How would you like to have your daughter bring home a real hero like that one?

The war on the West that Mr. Pendley writes about is not all being prosecuted by environmentalists, but they are doing the lion's share, and we would be very naive to underestimate their dedication and resolve and their capacity to do damage.