In 1964 the Republican Party went to the country with a platform which among other things contained a pledge which in substance asserted that we would support a Constitutional Amendment to permit individuals and groups who chose to do so to exercise their religion freely in public places provided religious exercises were not prepared or prescribed by the state or any of its subdivisions, with the further proviso that no person should be coerced into participating.

That is the substance of the amendment on prayer which I have offered and I mean to do my best to honor the pledge which we made to the country.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen
Dear:

It occurred to me while examining the crime statistics in the report of the FBI that major crimes are on the rise especially among youngsters at the very time when the Supreme Court has interdicted the use of prayers in public schools.

If the Court's main contention is that the prayer case which it considered stems from the fact that it was officially contrived by a board of education, surely a method and formula can be developed whereby prayers may be said in public schools. To me it is a bit astonishing that the Senate and the House of Representatives open each legislative day's session with a prayer but this spiritual uplift is denied to children. I am aware of the fact that they seek to distinguish a case like this by considering school children as a captive audience. Notwithstanding all of these contingents, a way must be found to bring the comfort, consolation and inspiration of prayer to youngsters because it is the one great anchorage for useful lives marked by proper respect for law and order.

As early as possible, I shall take up the cudgels on this matter and see what can be done.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen
Dear:

I have submitted a Resolution proposing a Constitutional amendment to permit voluntary participation in prayer in the public schools, as outlined in the enclosed statement.

I do appreciate your interest.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen

Enclosure (1)
Dear:

I appreciate your interest in my proposed Constitutional Amendment, S.J. Res. 148, to permit voluntary prayer in public schools. Enclosed is a copy of my remarks made on the Senate Floor on introducing this Resolution.

You may be assured your views will be duly considered when further action is taken and my intent is for further action soon.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen

Enclosure