

2493 = nonsense

September 3, 2012

For well more than three decades, well-meaning Christians have been hoodwinked by scary letters, faxes, emails and, now, blogs threatening dire calamity: Evil forces are about to get Jesus thrown off America's airwaves.

Throughout the years, the particulars have changed, but the common denominator is a warning that "Petition #2493" is being circulated to force the Federal Communications Commission to prevent the broadcast of programs that include reading the Bible, prayer, worship services, Christmas carols and Christmas features.

As far back as I can remember, the hoax claimed famed atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair proposed and promoted the petition. Finally, when most folks finally figured out she is dead, the rumor morphed. It claimed "they" were targeting "Dr. Dobson," Christian counselor and Focus on the Family founder James Dobson. Later, the rumor morphed again. In its latest iteration, the alleged victims of anti-Christian hooliganism are Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, Charles Stanley, David Jeremiah and "other pastors."

First things first: The whole thing is a lie. It was old, outdated and untrue when I first reported on it for Baptist Press in the mid-1980s. It was even older and no less a lie when I wrote my first editorial on it, somewhere about 1990. And now, Lord only knows how many reports and editorials later, it's still untrue and way, way older.

It's so old and untrue, I'm plain tired of writing about it. But thanks to the magic of the Internet, you can find more background, if you really, really want it.

- Here's an [editorial](#) I wrote on #2493 in the spring of 2009.

- Here's another [editorial](#), from 2003. I still like the references to Elvis and Bigfoot from that one.
- Here's a link to an [article](#) from the Snopes urban legends website.
- And here's a Wikipedia [article](#).

Help stamp out (this version of) Christian gullibility. Tell your friends and neighbors Petition #2493 is a zombie rumor. It's not real, but it just won't die.

Note: The fourth paragraph of this post has been revised. Originally, it stated James Dobson retired and shut down his program. Actually, Dobson resigned from Focus on the Family in 2010 and founded "James Dobson's Family Talk." Also the "Focus on the Family" program still is broadcast, with other hosts.