



**Benton County**  
Judge Barry Moehring  
County Judge  
215 E. Central Ave.  
Bentonville, AR. 72712  
[www.BentonCountyAr.gov](http://www.BentonCountyAr.gov)

---

Benton County Judge Barry Moehring's Comments on

**A Resolution Directing the Display of The Ten Commandments in All Benton County Buildings**

I want to take a few minutes to address the Ten Commandments display required under Act 573.

First, as County Judge, I have a duty to comply with state law unless and until a court rules otherwise. This display is going up because state law requires it. While the Quorum Court is taking formal action tonight, my role as County Judge is to ensure compliance with state law — not to advance or endorse a particular religious doctrine.

The posters themselves are being provided by a private third party, as directed by the statute, and are not being paid for with taxpayer dollars. Our role is simply to post them in compliance with state law.

There is ongoing litigation in Arkansas right now. Just recently, the federal Western District of Arkansas issued a ruling blocking enforcement of this law in certain Northwest Arkansas public school districts, including Benton County's two largest school districts.

In that ruling, Judge Timothy Brooks emphasized that "the Ten Commandments are plainly religious in nature," and raised concerns about the government requiring their display, particularly in environments where individuals are a captive audience.

That ruling is limited in scope. Currently, it does not apply statewide, and it does not apply to publicly funded buildings like ours. So, the law remains in effect for Benton County. But the ruling does make clear that the broader constitutional questions surrounding this law are still being actively worked through the courts.

It's also important to acknowledge that there are legal risks here. Courts have treated religious displays differently depending on context. While courthouse displays are not automatically unconstitutional, they are not automatically protected either.

Ultimately, if challenged, the courts will decide whether these displays remain in our buildings.

I also want to speak directly to our employees and members of the public.

First, let me address the public who, in the course of fulfilling their civic duties, have no option but to visit our facilities from time to time.

Many people in our community support the moral principles reflected in the Ten Commandments. I do as well.

But that's not the issue. Many citizens of Benton County feel uncomfortable with a specific religious text being required inside government buildings.

These citizens — our friends, neighbors, family members, and fellow churchgoers — may personally value those principles but still believe that the separation of church and state extends to our public buildings.

And it's important to remember that our buildings are paid for by all taxpayers, representing people of many different beliefs.

Now let me address the hard-working employees of Benton County, and future employees of this county.

No employee is expected to affirm, adopt, or adhere to any religious belief as a condition of employment. This display does not change how we govern. It does not alter anyone's constitutional rights. It does not create favoritism or religious tests.

Benton County serves every resident and treats every employee equally, regardless of faith or belief.

For my part, I am a practicing Christian. I also believe deeply in the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. Those convictions guide me to approach this issue carefully, respectfully, and within the bounds of the law.

That is why, as County Judge, I will absolutely ensure Benton County is compliant with that law. That is my duty.

However, I am equally obligated to ensure, to the best of my ability, that all citizens feel welcome to come to our buildings or work here on behalf of the public.

For those reasons, I will not sign this resolution.

We will comply with the statute as required. If the courts ultimately rule differently, we will comply with that ruling as well.