

Every Friday during lent our school won't serve meat because the Christians can't eat it, but we get a choice of a salad or yogurt instead of the main meal. Is that violating the separation from school and state rule? There is no reported law in Arizona topic, but this is how a court might rule:

The United States and Arizona Consitutions prohibit the state from entangling state functions with religious functions. In other words, the government cannot promote or interfere with religions.

If the school is a private, non-federally funded school, then the school can engage in religious practices if the school wants to do so. If a school is government run or is federally funded, the school must be sure to follow the law on separation of church and state.

Using federal funds to promote a religious practice in a public school would not be allowed. However, if a specific practice exists for a secular (non-religious) reason, and if it neither promotes nor inhibits a specific religion, it may be okay. An example would be discussing religion in a class on the history of all world religions.

A public school that serves no meat products on Fridays during Lent (a Christian practice) may not be in violation of the law as long as the school doesn't require everyone to eat lunch there and doesn't otherwise promote Christianity as part of that lunch service. The practice doesn't violate any other religion's practices, doesn't force anyone to eat in the cafeteria, and may have a secular purpose. It is possible, for example, that the school chooses to serve meatless meals to prevent waste given that many students choose not to eat meat during Lent.

Keep in mind that, because there is no specific law in this state on this issue, a court might hold otherwise if a lawsuit were filed to stop the practice. Then appellate courts would get involved until a final decision was reached. A court cannot decide the issue unless someone challenges the practice in a court of law.