



AP Breaking News

Lockyer pulls anti-Bush painting from exhibit

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SACRAMENTO, (AP) --

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Attorney General Bill Lockyer has pulled a painting critical of President Bush from a public exhibit and moved it to his office, where public access is limited.

"T'anks to Mr. Bush!" by anti-war activist Stephen Percy, depicts a star-spangled United States being flushed down the toilet. It was part of an exhibit of art created by lawyers that is on display in the state Department of Justice cafeteria.

Last month, conservative activists and talk radio hosts protested outside the exhibit, calling the painting offensive. The California Republican Party called on Lockyer to take it down.

Lockyer's office said the decision to move the piece was not a response to the complaints. Lockyer spokesman Nathan Barankin said the painting was removed from the cafeteria, along with two others, because of "concerns about the current situation in the Middle East."

The other relocated paintings are a poster reading "Palestine -- Stop U.S. Financed Genocide in the Middle East" and a painting depicting a caricature of President Bush riding a tank shaped like a church.

In moving the paintings, Lockyer is giving up

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his First Amendment right to political speech, Percy said. The lawyer gained attention in February for hanging an effigy of an American soldier outside his Sacramento home.

Percy asked that his painting be returned to the exhibit, which is scheduled to be taken down at the end of the month. Barankin said the attorney general controls placement of artwork in the building.

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