

Westboro Church plans protest of funeral for Pa. children

by [Sara Ganim](#)

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HARRISBURG, Pa. (RNS) Westboro Baptist Church, the controversial group that just won a free speech Supreme Court case, said it plans to protest at a funeral for seven Pennsylvania children who died in a fire Tuesday (March 8) night.

"I'm baffled that they would choose this," said Perry County District Attorney Charles F. Chenot III. "This is a family that's obviously apparently Christian in their beliefs and certainly shouldn't conflict with the beliefs of the Westboro Baptist Church."

Westboro says the children's deaths are linked to the recent Supreme Court decision, in which a father sued the church after it protested his slain Marine son's funeral in 2008.

"The bottom line is that they can't interfere with the funeral itself," Chenot said of the service set for March 15.

The church has threatened to picket funerals in Perry County before, Chenot said. They did not show up though, and Chenot said he hopes that this is an empty threat.

"I suspect this is just to get attention," he said. "That's the only reason I can think they would want to attend this funeral."

A police presence will be assembled, just in case. "Will there be some vigilante justice? I hope not," Chenot said. "But I think the potential is there."