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[Perry Watch: Reliant manager brushes aside criticism of prayer event sponsor but says stadium 'wouldn't want to rent to al-Qaeda'](#)



★★★

This report was written by Mike Morris of the Houston Chronicle.

A prayer event [Gov. Rick Perry](#) has organized at Reliant Stadium on Aug. 6 is drawing nationwide criticism, in part because the event is being organized by the American Family Association, which advocates against gay rights.

The AFA has been labeled a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

When it comes to hosting potentially controversial events at the Reliant Complex, SMG/Reliant Park general manager Mark Miller said each proposal is considered on its own merits — within reason.

"It's really a case-by-case basis of who wants to come book the building and what they want to book the building for," said Miller, whose company contracts with Harris County to operate the Reliant complex. "If any group came by that was presenting a program that we didn't feel was in the best interest of the community, I think it would be doubtful the building would be rented to them."

Reliant Stadium will host Rick Perry's Day of Prayer
(Wikimedia Commons photo)

Miller said SMG has turned down events in the past, but those denials were based on the events not being in the park's business interests — renting out for an arena football game, for instance, a Houston Texans' competitor — and not because of ethical or moral concerns.

"Whether or not somebody has categorized (the AFA) as a hate group, I didn't have any knowledge of that," Miller said of Perry's event. "Somebody coming in wanting to have a prayer event for the nation doesn't automatically raise a red

flag that it's a bad thing to do.”

The content of a proposed program matters more than the group wishing to present it, he said.

“The presenting entity would raise the level of scrutiny regarding the program and the appropriateness of the program. If somebody came in that was obviously a group that had a reputation of violence or a reputation of being anti-government or anti-whatever, then obviously we would look,” Miller said. “We wouldn't want to rent to al-Qaeda.”

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(TxPotomac photo illustration)

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