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## God awarded victory in US court case

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18th October, 2008

# THE ARTICLE

A US court has rejected a case brought against God by an American politician. Ernie Chambers, the longest-serving senator in the state of Nebraska, tried to use the courts to stop God from harming people. Mr. Chambers, 71, filed a lawsuit that ordered God to stop causing "widespread death, destruction and terrorization of millions upon millions of the Earth's inhabitants". He listed examples of the terrible things God allows to happen on Earth, including "fearsome floods, horrendous hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, famine, genocidal wars, birth defects, terrifying tornadoes and the like". Chambers said the "defendant", God, has not apologized for any of the troubles brought to Earth, saying the Almighty has shown "neither compassion nor remorse".

The court judge threw Mr. Chambers' case out on a technicality. Nebraska state law requires all defendants in court cases to have an address. This is so state officials can deliver papers requesting the defendant attends court. Mr. Chambers disputed this. He said the court acknowledged the existence of God and because of this, it knew God was everywhere so there was no need for a street address. He added that: "Since God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit." Mr. Chambers' real reason for his actions is not because he has any grudge against God. He said he simply wants to show that law courts are open and available to anyone. He said: "Anyone can sue anyone they choose, even God." The senator has 30 days to decide whether to appeal against the ruling.

# WARM-UPS

**1. COURT CASES:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about court cases. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*U.S. courts / harming people / Earth's inhabitants / floods / famine / compassion / judges / addresses / the existence of God / being everywhere / grudges / suing people*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. SUE ANYONE?:** What would life be like if you could sue anyone and win? Complete the table below. Share what you wrote with your partner(s).

Who?	For how much?	Why?
Best friend		
English teacher		
Country's leader		
A world leader		
A business person		
Anyone else ____		

**4. COURTS:** Students A **strongly** believe the present courts system is the best; Students B **strongly** believe the courts system is no good and needs to be changed. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

**5. TERRIBLE THINGS:** Talk with your partner(s) about these terrible things from the article. How can we lessen their impact on human life?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• fearsome floods</li><li>• horrendous hurricanes</li><li>• earthquakes</li><li>• plagues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• famine</li><li>• genocidal wars</li><li>• birth defects</li><li>• terrifying tornadoes</li></ul>
---	--

**6. GOD:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'God'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. A judge awarded God a victory in a case heard in an American court.   | T / F |
| b. A U.S. senator tried to sue God for bringing bad things to the Earth. | T / F |
| c. One of the bad things was terrorism and the war against terror.       | T / F |
| d. The senator said God had not apologized for bringing the bad things.  | T / F |
| e. The case was decided on the fact that God has no fixed address.       | T / F |
| f. The senator said God's address was #1 Main Street, U.S.A.             | T / F |
| g. The senator said he had a huge grudge against God.                    | T / F |
| h. The senator has 3 months to try and sue God again in another case.    | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. rejected    | a. grievance      |
| 2. widespread  | b. residents      |
| 3. inhabitants | c. pity           |
| 4. horrendous  | d. asking         |
| 5. compassion  | e. disagreed with |
| 6. requires    | f. thrown out     |
| 7. requesting  | g. decision       |
| 8. disputed    | h. needs          |
| 9. grudge      | i. universal      |
| 10. ruling     | j. terrible       |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. A US court has rejected a case           | a. death                 |
| 2. filed a                                  | b. available to anyone   |
| 3. causing widespread                       | c. anyone they choose    |
| 4. millions of the Earth's                  | d. brought against God   |
| 5. shown neither compassion                 | e. out on a technicality |
| 6. The court judge threw Mr. Chambers' case | f. lawsuit               |
| 7. the court acknowledged the existence     | g. against the ruling    |
| 8. law courts are open and                  | h. nor remorse           |
| 9. Anyone can sue                           | i. inhabitants           |
| 10. appeal                                  | j. of God                |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A US court has \_\_\_\_\_ a case brought against God by an American politician. Ernie Chambers, the longest-serving senator in the state of Nebraska, tried to \_\_\_\_\_ the courts to stop God from harming people. Mr. Chambers, 71, \_\_\_\_\_ a lawsuit that ordered God to stop causing "widespread death, destruction and terrorization of millions upon \_\_\_\_\_ of the Earth's inhabitants". He listed examples of the terrible things God allows to happen on Earth, including "fearsome floods, horrendous hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, famine, genocidal \_\_\_\_\_, birth defects, terrifying tornadoes and the \_\_\_\_\_ ". Chambers said the "defendant", God, has not apologized for any of the \_\_\_\_\_ brought to Earth, saying the Almighty has shown "neither compassion \_\_\_\_\_ remorse".

The court judge \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Chambers' case out on a technicality. Nebraska state law requires all defendants in court \_\_\_\_\_ to have an address. This is so state officials can deliver papers requesting the defendant \_\_\_\_\_ court. Mr. Chambers disputed this. He said the court acknowledged the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and because of this, it knew God was everywhere so there was no need for a street address. He added that: "\_\_\_\_\_ God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit." Mr. Chambers' real reason for his \_\_\_\_\_ is not because he has any grudge against God. He said he simply wants to show that law courts are open and \_\_\_\_\_ to anyone. He said: "Anyone can sue anyone they choose, even God." The senator has 30 days to decide whether to \_\_\_\_\_ against the ruling.

*millions*

*like*

*use*

*nor*

*filed*

*troubles*

*rejected*

*wars*

*actions*

*cases*

*appeal*

*existence*

*available*

*threw*

*since*

*attends*

## **LISTENING:** Listen and fill in the spaces.

A US court has rejected a \_\_\_\_\_ God by an American politician. Ernie Chambers, the longest-serving senator in the state of Nebraska, \_\_\_\_\_ courts to stop God from harming people. Mr. Chambers, 71, filed a lawsuit that ordered God \_\_\_\_\_ "widespread death, destruction and terrorization of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Earth's inhabitants". He listed examples of the terrible things God allows to happen on Earth, including "\_\_\_\_\_, horrendous hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, famine, \_\_\_\_\_, birth defects, terrifying tornadoes and the like". Chambers said the "defendant", God, has not apologized for any of the troubles brought to Earth, saying the Almighty has shown "\_\_\_\_\_ remorse".

The court judge threw Mr. Chambers' \_\_\_\_\_ technicality. Nebraska state law requires all defendants in court cases to have an address. This is \_\_\_\_\_ can deliver papers requesting the defendant attends court. Mr. Chambers \_\_\_\_\_. He said the court acknowledged the existence of God and because of this, it knew God was everywhere so there \_\_\_\_\_ street address. He added that: "Since God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit." Mr. Chambers' real reason for his actions is not because he \_\_\_\_\_ against God. He said he simply wants to show that law courts are open and available to anyone. He said: "\_\_\_\_\_ they choose, even God." The senator has 30 days to decide whether to \_\_\_\_\_ ruling.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**court**' and '**case**'.

<b>court</b>	<b>case</b>

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• rejected</li><li>• harming</li><li>• widespread</li><li>• fearsome</li><li>• wars</li><li>• nor</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• threw</li><li>• deliver</li><li>• existence</li><li>• real</li><li>• anyone</li><li>• appeal</li></ul>
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# STUDENT COURTS SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about courts in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

# DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'God'?
- c) What do you think of Ernie Chambers' actions?
- d) What would happen in your country if someone tried to sue God?
- e) Is God responsible for the world's death and destruction?
- f) Does your country have fearsome floods, horrendous hurricanes, or any other kinds of natural disasters?
- g) Do you think Mr. Chambers might have more success suing the U.S. government for causing terrible things?
- h) How could God apologize?
- i) What would you think if the judge put God on trial?
- j) Have you heard of any other unusual court cases?

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# DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Does your country have a good court system?
- c) Why should anyone who goes to court have to have an address?
- d) Is Mr. Chambers right when he said God is everywhere and so doesn't need an address?
- e) If Mr. Chambers is right and God does know of this lawsuit, should the judge have allowed the case to continue?
- f) Do you think America's court system is the best in the world?
- g) Do you think it's right that anyone can sue anyone else?
- h) Do you think Mr. Chambers should appeal?
- i) Have you ever been inside a court?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Ernie Chambers?

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# LANGUAGE

A US court has rejected a (1) \_\_\_\_ brought against God by an American politician. Ernie Chambers, the longest-serving senator in the state of Nebraska, (2) \_\_\_\_ to use the courts to stop God from harming people. Mr. Chambers, 71, filed a lawsuit that ordered God to stop causing "widespread (3) \_\_\_\_, destruction and terrorization of millions (4) \_\_\_\_ millions of the Earth's inhabitants". He listed examples of the terrible things God allows to happen on Earth, including "fearsome floods, horrendous hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, famine, genocidal wars, birth defects, terrifying tornadoes and the (5) \_\_\_\_ ". Chambers said the "defendant", God, has not apologized for any of the troubles brought to Earth, saying the Almighty has shown "neither compassion (6) \_\_\_\_ remorse".

The court judge threw Mr. Chambers' case (7) \_\_\_\_ on a technicality. Nebraska state law requires all defendants in court cases to have an address. This is so state officials can (8) \_\_\_\_ papers requesting the defendant attends court. Mr. Chambers disputed this. He said the court acknowledged the existence (9) \_\_\_\_ God and because of this, it knew God was everywhere so there was no need for a street address. He (10) \_\_\_\_ that: "Since God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit." Mr. Chambers' real reason for his actions is not because he has any grudge (11) \_\_\_\_ God. He said he simply wants to show that law courts are open and available to anyone. He said: "Anyone can (12) \_\_\_\_ anyone they choose, even God." The senator has 30 days to decide whether to appeal against the ruling.

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

- |     |              |             |                |              |
|-----|--------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1.  | (a) case     | (b) bag     | (c) wallet     | (d) purse    |
| 2.  | (a) tries    | (b) tried   | (c) trial      | (d) trying   |
| 3.  | (a) dies     | (b) dead    | (c) death      | (d) die      |
| 4.  | (a) around   | (b) onto    | (c) over       | (d) upon     |
| 5.  | (a) liked    | (b) liking  | (c) likes      | (d) like     |
| 6.  | (a) never    | (b) non-    | (c) nor        | (d) not      |
| 7.  | (a) out      | (b) up      | (c) down       | (d) far      |
| 8.  | (a) delivery | (b) deliver | (c) delivering | (d) delivers |
| 9.  | (a) in       | (b) on      | (c) of         | (d) with     |
| 10. | (a) added    | (b) adds    | (c) addition   | (d) additive |
| 11. | (a) forward  | (b) for     | (c) again      | (d) against  |
| 12. | (a) sow      | (b) sue     | (c) sew        | (d) so       |

## WRITING:

Write about **law courts** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about the case in this article. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. COURTS:** Make a poster about the types of courts in your country. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. SUED:** Write a magazine article about the conclusion of the case between Ernie Chambers and God. Include imaginary interviews with Mr. Chambers and the judge.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. DIARY / JOURNAL:** You are a judge. Write about one day in your life. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

**6. LETTER:** Write a letter to Ernie Chambers. Ask him three questions about his court case. Give him three suggestions on what he should do next. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. T      f. F      g. F      h. F

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. rejected    | a. thrown out     |
| 2. widespread  | b. universal      |
| 3. inhabitants | c. residents      |
| 4. horrendous  | d. terrible       |
| 5. compassion  | e. pity           |
| 6. requires    | f. needs          |
| 7. requesting  | g. asking         |
| 8. disputed    | h. disagreed with |
| 9. grudge      | i. grievance      |
| 10. ruling     | j. decision       |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. A US court has rejected a case           | a. brought against God   |
| 2. filed a                                  | b. lawsuit               |
| 3. causing widespread                       | c. death                 |
| 4. millions of the Earth's                  | d. inhabitants           |
| 5. shown neither compassion                 | e. nor remorse           |
| 6. The court judge threw Mr. Chambers' case | f. out on a technicality |
| 7. the court acknowledged the existence     | g. of God                |
| 8. law courts are open and                  | h. available to anyone   |
| 9. Anyone can sue                           | i. anyone they choose    |
| 10. appeal                                  | j. against the ruling    |

## GAP FILL:

### God awarded victory in US court case

A US court has **rejected** a case brought against God by an American politician. Ernie Chambers, the longest-serving senator in the state of Nebraska, tried to **use** the courts to stop God from harming people. Mr. Chambers, 71, **filed** a lawsuit that ordered God to stop causing "widespread death, destruction and terrorization of millions upon **millions** of the Earth's inhabitants". He listed examples of the terrible things God allows to happen on Earth, including "fearsome floods, horrendous hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, famine, genocidal **wars**, birth defects, terrifying tornadoes and the **like**". Chambers said the "defendant", God, has not apologized for any of the **troubles** brought to Earth, saying the Almighty has shown "neither compassion **nor** remorse".

The court judge **threw** Mr. Chambers' case out on a technicality. Nebraska state law requires all defendants in court **cases** to have an address. This is so state officials can deliver papers requesting the defendant **attends** court. Mr. Chambers disputed this. He said the court acknowledged the **existence** of God and because of this, it knew God was everywhere so there was no need for a street address. He added that: "**Since** God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit." Mr. Chambers' real reason for his **actions** is not because he has any grudge against God. He said he simply wants to show that law courts are open and **available** to anyone. He said: "Anyone can sue anyone they choose, even God." The senator has 30 days to decide whether to **appeal** against the ruling.

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a      2 - b      3 - c      4 - d      5 - d      6 - c      7 - a      8 - b      9 - c      10 - a      11 - d      12 - b