

# Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 8 Number 8 • August 2002

## Our August Meeting

The August 11 AFS meeting will feature **Reggie Finley** who will give his Critical Thinking Seminar.

Reggie is well known as the Infidel Guy on the internet, and has an excellent internet radio show, *Live With the Infidelguy*. Reggie is also very active in online debates with theists and has a large online library of freethought radio programs. (See his website at [www.infidelguy.com](http://www.infidelguy.com).)

The meeting will be at 1:00 at the **AFS Center**, Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, in Roswell, GA. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 north past I-285 by 8 miles to Exit 7B, which is GA-140. Take GA-140 (Holcomb Bridge Road) west about 1 mile and turn left at Grimes Bridge Road. Go 0.2 miles to 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, which is on the right.

## Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the AFS Center at 12:30 on Sunday, August 25.

## SOS Meets at AFS Center

The Secular Organizations for Sobriety meets at the AFS Center every Tuesday evening at 7:30 PM. SOS is the secular replacement for AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).

## Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** will meet at 12:30 PM on September 1 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Highway in Atlanta. For details, see [www.kindreason.com](http://www.kindreason.com).

## The Tuesday Lunch Bunch

A group of AFS members meets every Tuesday at 12:00 at Panahar Restaurant. The address is 3375 Buford Hwy, Suite 1060, in Atlanta. Come on down and enjoy the Bangladeshi food buffet and the great company. For more information, call Steve Yothment at 770-339-8394 or email him at [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com).

## Meetings and Activities

Aug 10: AFS Hike, Chattahoochee River NRA, 11:00 AM.  
Aug 11: AFS General Meeting at AFS Center, 1:00 PM.  
Aug 16: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.  
Aug 18: AFS Discussion Group at AFS Center, 4:00 PM.  
Aug 24: Dinner at Panahar Restaurant, 6:30 PM.  
Aug 25: Humanists of Georgia at AFS Center, 12:30 PM.  
Sept 1: Fellowship of Reason meets at NUUC, 12:30 PM.

## AFS Activities

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, August 18, from 4 to 6 PM at the AFS Center.

The **AFS Hike** will be on Saturday, August 10, at 11:00 at the Island Ford Branch of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 north to the Northridge Road exit. Stay in the right lane and cross over I-400, then take an immediate right onto Dunwoody Place. Go right at the second light on Roberts Drive. The park entrance is on the right less than a mile ahead. Meet at the end of the road. For info, call Lew Southern at 770-509-8272.

## The AFS Social

The next **AFS Social** will be at Las Margaritas Restaurant at 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, August 16, at 7:00 PM.

To get there from the north, take I-85 to the Cheshire Bridge Road exit (Exit 88). Turn left at the light and go about 1.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the right.

To get there from the south, take Piedmont Rd. north to Cheshire Bridge Road. Turn right at Cheshire Bridge Road and go about 0.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the left.

## Fund-Raising Dinner

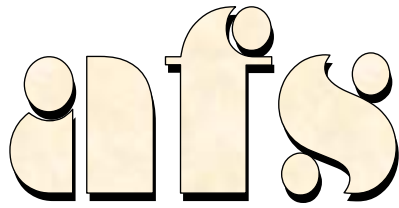
AFS will have a fund-raising dinner at Panahar Restaurant on Saturday, August 24, at 6:30 PM. Tickets can be obtained at the monthly meeting or by mail for \$20 each. Tickets will be \$25 at the door.

Panahar Restaurant is in the Northeast Plaza Shopping Center on Buford Highway. The restaurant is owned by AFS member Mirza Ameen. The address is 3375 Buford Highway, Suite 1060, Atlanta, GA.

To get there from north of Atlanta, take I-85 South to the Clairmont Road Exit (Exit 91) and turn right at the light. Go 1.3 miles and turn left onto Buford Highway. Go 1.5 miles and turn left into the Northeast Plaza Shopping Center. Panahar Restaurant is across from "Planet Fitness."

To get there from south of Atlanta, take I-75/85 North to I-85 North (Exit 251). Take the North Druid Hills Road Exit (Exit 89) and stay left at the exit ramp to Highway 42 North. Turn right onto North Druid Hills Road and go 0.4 miles. Turn right onto Buford Highway and go 0.8 miles. Turn right into the Northeast Plaza Shopping Center; veer left. Panahar Restaurant is across from "Planet Fitness."

"The way to see by faith is to shut the eye of reason."  
— Benjamin Franklin



**Atlanta  
Freethought  
Society**

## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AFS Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

Aug 11: Reggie Finley will present his seminar on Critical Thinking. Reggie has an internet radio talk show called *Live with the Infidelguy* in which he discusses and debates religious issues with many people. See his website at [www.infidelguy.com](http://www.infidelguy.com).

Sept 8: Sam Chupp will speak on "Much Ado About Harry: Myth & Hysteria in Popular Culture." The subject is about how some short-sighted individuals characterize fantasy literature as "occult", and what you can do about it.

Oct 13: Clark Adams, Public Relations Director for The Internet Infidels, will speak on current Internet Infidels projects. ([cadams@infidels.org](mailto:cadams@infidels.org))

Nov 10: Dr. Scott Lillienfeld of Emory University will speak on false memories.

To join the AFS Forum e-mail list, send a blank message to [afs-forum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:afs-forum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To join the AFS Announcements list, send a blank email to [afs-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:afs-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To join the Georgia Freethinkers Letter Writing Cooperative, send a blank email to [flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to [xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com).

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about the advantages of living life free of religious dogma through speeches, debates, discussions, protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or, especially, lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion, primarily through having a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs and by maintaining and using our own extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

**Atlanta Freethought News  
an AFS publication**

**Editor**

Steve Yothment

**How to Contact the Editor**

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**The Atlanta Freethought News**

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For membership and subscription  
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1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite  
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Membership in AFS is \$25 / year for in-  
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# Freethought News

## THE BIRMINGHAM PROTEST

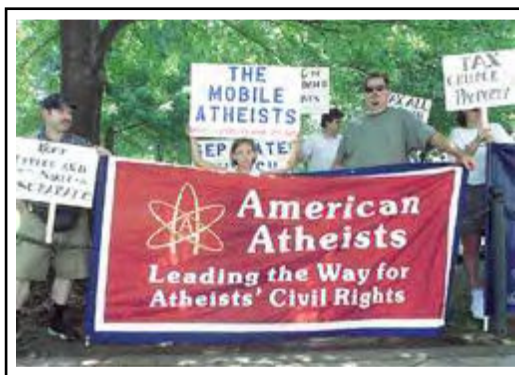
President Bush's so-called faith-based initiative got only a brief mention at the end of his July 16 economics speech in Birmingham, AL, but it was at the forefront of protesters' minds.

About 20 sign-toting atheists were among nearly 30 protesters at Linn Park about 100 yards from the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center, where Bush helped U.S. Rep. Bob Riley, R-Ashland, raise an estimated \$4 million through his gubernatorial campaign luncheon.

AFS member Larry Darby reported that he and others were interviewed by multiple affiliates of national networks. Of particular note was that Ken Cornelius, Coordinator for the Birmingham Atheists, had a long interview on Alabama Public Television. Larry was interviewed on APTV's *For The Record*, along with a law clerk from the Alabama Supreme Court. The interview can be seen at [www.aptv.org/FTR/video.asp](http://www.aptv.org/FTR/video.asp).

Many protesters were quoted by the media. "You cannot force people to donate money to a charity," said Blair Scott, president of Mobile Atheists. "I give to religious charities sometimes. Some are worthy, but many are not."

Bush has used the faith-based initiative term to describe his support for giving \$30 million to grassroots organizations, including faith- and community-based groups that expand in targeted areas.



"I'm a strong proponent of the faith-based initiative because I understand that government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives," Bush said in his speech at the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

Other atheists at the rally in the park carried signs protesting recent judicial decisions.

"One Nation Under One Constitution," read the sign carried by Larry Darby, who is also president of Alabama Atheists, which is affiliated with American Atheists.

"This is a counter-statement to the idea of one nation under God," Darby said, referring to a California appeals judge's recent decision condemning the "under God" reference in the Pledge of Allegiance. "This recognizes that the Constitution is the supreme document in the land."

Darby noted that the U.S. Constitution includes no reference to religion except in Article VI, which holds that

"no religious test shall ever be required" for someone to hold public office.

Andrew Meadows, 18, of Huntsville carried a sign opposing the use of federally funded vouchers to help parents send students to private schools — a practice supported by Bush and upheld recently by a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court. "It's a waste of money," Meadows said. "I don't believe my tax dollars should be used to support private schools, most of which are religious."

[ This article is from [atheists.org/al](http://atheists.org/al) and [AnistonOnline.com](http://AnistonOnline.com). ]

## DECLARED ENEMIES IN TENNESSEE

A County Commission in Putnam County, Tennessee, passed a resolution of concern to freethinkers on July 17. Apparently, the commission wants to post the Ten Commandments in public schools and other public buildings. The resolution reads as follows:

"We, the below-signed sitting Commission of Putnam County, in consideration of our great Biblical history of Tennessee, both in our Tennessee Constitution and devotional activities in our heritage, hereby acknowledge the importance of the Ten Commandments of Almighty God and wish to go on record in support of this Magnificent Document and state that we will defend our right to its display to the limit of our ability, against all enemies, domestic and foreign, public and private."



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# Freethought News *(continued)*

AFS member Matt Jordon expressed concern about the resolution in the AFS Forum, our email discussion list. "It's the 'enemies' language that really got me," he said. "If I lived in that county, I would now in essence be a declared enemy of the government by virtue of my non-Biblical beliefs. It's pretty clear the commissioners see anyone with differing views as an enemy. It's hard to imagine a more un-American position."

The resolution was communicated to the public in a July 18 article of the *Herald-Citizen*, a Putnam County newspaper.

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## JUDGEMENT DAY IS COMING

In two-and-a-half months Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore will find himself in court facing a federal judge. This time, he will be the defendant. October 15 is the date set for Judge Moore to answer charges that he violated the law when he placed the ten commandments monument in the state Judicial Complex.

In a speech on July 25 to the Christian Coalition, Judge Moore didn't mention the two lawsuits filed against him, but he did talk about the monument. It was the one-year anniversary of the monument's unveiling.

One year ago, Chief Justice Roy Moore stunned even workers in the Judicial Complex by unveiling what was probably one of the best kept secrets in state government. The man who became known as the Ten Commandments Judge, unveiled a monument in granite with, among other quotes, the Ten Commandments on it. And Judge Moore is still defending what he believes is his right to display publicly a belief in god. "You see, we think that the sovereignty of God is forbidden out there (in the world). Well, I would like somebody from the ACLU or the Southern Poverty Law Center or anybody else to show me how that's possible."

It didn't take long after the unveiling for the ACLU and the Southern Poverty Law Center as well

as a group of African-American lawmakers to oppose the monument. Members of that group brought excerpts from one of Martin Luther King's speeches they wanted placed in the rotunda too, but they were turned away. However, the critics haven't gone anywhere. Maggie Garrett of the ACLU recently said, "Placing the Ten Commandments there is placing the government's stamp of approval on a religious creed."

As a result, Judge Moore is facing two lawsuits – one filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the other by the ACLU. Garrett says they feel strongly about their position too. "Many courts have visited this issue of the ten commandments being put up by governments and the courts have consistently held that it's unconstitutional."

Judge Moore appears confident he will win in court, citing history and law that he feels are on his side. "Separation of church and state was never meant to separate the recognition of God from the state," he said. "It was meant to keep the state out of the church, not out of government."

Chief Justice Moore also defended the 'under God' clause of the pledge of allegiance, which was ruled unconstitutional last month by a Federal Appeals court in California.

[Facts in this article are from a report on [www.wsfa.com](http://www.wsfa.com), the website of WSFA TV in Montgomery, AL.]

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## ANNIVERSARY OF SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK APPROACHES

American Atheists Urges Secular  
Memorials Across The Nation!

[From an American Atheists News  
Bulletin]

On September 11, 2001, Islamic militants launched the ultimate "faith-based initiative" and attacked targets in Washington, DC and New York City. Thousands died in this religion-based terrorism, and the lives of many more were affected.

The one year anniversary of that

tragic occurrence approaches.

Over the course of the past year, the September 11 tragedy has become an excuse to violate the separation of church and state. Clerics and political leaders, including President George Bush, have exploited the events and the horrific imagery to rally the nation to prayer and religious faith. As with the cold war decades ago, religious belief is now promoted as a badge of patriotism and concern for fellow human beings. In the process, millions of Americans who profess no religion have been insulted, marginalized and excluded.

It's time to take back and reclaim our share of the cultural landscape. One way to do this is for Atheist, Freethought, Humanist and other secularist groups to consider sponsoring Secular Memorials on or about September 11, 2002. If we demand "a seat at the table" in political affairs, we must claim participation in honoring the victims of this tragedy, and saluting the many heroes and heroines as well.

American Atheists urges you to visit [www.secularmemorials.org](http://www.secularmemorials.org) and consider organizing an appropriate event in your community. There are suggestions, along with resources and a discussion board so you and your group can join the conversation.

America's diverse community of nonbelievers has every right to be heard on this important issue. If you are a member of an Atheist, Freethought, Humanist or other nonbeliever group, consider joining with us in this national event.

Visit [www.secularmemorials.org](http://www.secularmemorials.org).



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Announcing...

# *The AFS Fundraising Dinner*

Saturday, August 24, 2002 - 6:30 PM

## *MENU*

### The Beginning

#### **VEGETABLE SAMOSA**

Triangular pastry stuffed with cubed potatoes, carrots, green peas, and peanuts. Served with sweet & sour tamarind sauce and slightly spicy mint-yogurt sauce on the side.

*(condiments)*

#### **TAMARIND SAUCE**

Sweet & sour tamarind sauce

#### **MINT SAUCE**

Slightly spicy mint-yogurt sauce

### Appetizer Selection

#### **CHICKEN TIKKA**

Succulent pieces of boneless Chicken marinated in special Tandoori sauce, freshly ground aromatic herbs & spices, then barbecued on skewers in a Tandoori Clay Oven.

#### **NAAN**

Soft unleavened fluffy bread baked in a Tandoori Clay Oven.

#### **RAITA**

Condiment made with yogurt, whipped with ground black pepper, and blended with chopped Carrots, Cucumbers, Tomatoes, and Cilantro.

### Entree Selection

#### **LAMB DHAANSHAAG**

Cubed Lamb, cooked with Mashoor Daal (lentils), with herbs and spices - slightly spicy.

The chef's special recipe creates a hot, Sweet & Sour combination taste.

#### **BEEF SHAAG GOST**

Cubed Beef, cooked with spinach and herbs.

#### **NIRAMISH**

Combination of several vegetables cooked together. Mixed vegetable medley.

#### **NAAN**

Soft unleavened fluffy bread baked in a Tandoori Clay Oven.

### Rice

#### **PEAS POLAO**

Aromatic Bashmotee rice sautéed with green peas, grilled onion, raisins, whole cardamom, bay leaves, and a blend of herbs.

### Dessert

#### **LAAL-MOHON**

Homemade cheese balls, lightly fried, and dipped in honey-sugar syrup.

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# VOUCHER AID TO RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS VIOLATES STATE CONSTITUTION, SAYS FLORIDA COURT

Just weeks before the start of the school year, a judge struck down Florida's voucher law on Monday (August 5), saying the state constitution forbids the use of tax money to send youngsters to religious schools.

The decision could mean turmoil for the 50 or so students who are attending private school under the only statewide voucher program in the nation and might have to go back to public school. In addition, nearly 340 other youngsters had hoped to use vouchers this school year.

Gov. Jeb Bush, who strongly backed the 1999 voucher law as one of the centerpiece accomplishments of his administration, said the state will appeal and try to prevent the ruling from taking effect this school year.

Just over a month ago, the U.S. Supreme Court swept aside a major hurdle to voucher programs, ruling that such uses of tax dollars do not violate the separation of church and state required by the U.S. Constitution.

But state Circuit Judge P. Kevin Davey based his ruling on the Florida Constitution, which he said is "clear and unambiguous" in prohibiting public money from going to churches or other sectarian institutions.

"While this court recognizes and empathizes with the ... purpose of this legislation — to enhance the educational opportunity of children caught in the snare of substandard schools — such a purpose does not grant this court authority to abandon the clear mandate of the people as enunciated in the constitution," Davey wrote.

He barred students from using vouchers to attend private school this year.

"We knew when a judge looked at it that he would side with us," said Maureen Dinnen, president of the Florida Education Association, the state's teachers union. "It is absolutely wrong to divert tax money to private schools. Now we can focus on public schools again."

Other voucher programs are under way in Cleveland and in Milwaukee.

The 1999 Florida law allows students at public schools that earn a failing grade two years out of four to get a voucher to attend private schools, including religious schools.

The parents of 338 children had notified the state they intended to use vouchers for the coming school year, which begins in mid- to late-August in many districts.

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld an Ohio voucher law, ruling that state money could be spent on religious schools if parents can freely choose what private school they want their children to attend.

But the Florida Constitution says more explicitly that no state money can aid any church or religious institution. And states are free to enact more far-reaching protections than the federal government.

Florida's law was challenged by the teachers union, the Florida PTA, the Florida League of Women Voters and several families and educators.

After Monday's ruling, the governor said the state is prepared to find private money to help children

attend private schools.

Students at two Pensacola elementary schools were eligible for vouchers in the first three years of the program and approximately 50 students have opted to use vouchers at five private schools.

Nearly 9,000 students at 10 public schools around the state became eligible for the 2002-03 school year.

It was Americans United for Separation of Church and State and allied organizations that brought the challenge to the Florida program.

Over two thirds of the states have state constitutions that are more explicit in their prohibition of tax support for religion compared to the U.S. Constitution.

"The Florida court's decision shows that the battle over vouchers is far from over," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "I expect to see similar decisions against vouchers in state courts around the country."

"The Bush brothers' plan to funnel funds to religious schools just ran into a major roadblock," Lynn added.

Lynn noted that voucher programs are unpopular with most Americans. In ballot referenda in 2000, voters from every racial, religious, socio-economic and political group voted against giving tax aid to religious schools.

[This article is from an August 5 news release from Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and an August 5 Associated Press article by reporter David Royle.]

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"The divorce between Church and State ought to be absolute. It ought to be so absolute that no Church property anywhere, in any state or in the nation, should be exempt for equal taxation; for if you exempt the property of any church or organization to that extent you impose a tax upon the whole community." — James A Garfield, 20th U.S. President (1881)

"As nightfall does not come all at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight. And it is in such twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air - however slight - lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness." — Justice William O. Douglas, US Supreme Court

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# Letters to the Editor from AFS members

Larry Darby's letter (below left) was in the *Florence Times Daily* on July 11.

Larry's letter (below right) was in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on August 1.

Charlie George's letter was in the *Birmingham Post Herald* on July 24.

## Ruling Overdue

(Letter writer) W. T. Willingham indicates supporters of the recent ruling regarding the Pledge of Allegiance divide America from within and will subsequently destroy themselves.

Willingham has it backwards. Religion is divisive. The framers of our Constitution recognized that a separation between government and religion would prevent or, at least, minimize the strife and warfare that were inherent in the faith-based governments of Europe.

Recognition of any deity, especially the God of Theism, is conspicuously absent from that supreme law of the land.

Another supreme law of the land, the treaty with Tripoli, reads, "As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion ..."

The court's finding that the words "under God" in the pledge make it unconstitutional is long overdue.

Next, Congress must restore our motto, "E pluribus unum," simultaneously removing "In God We Trust" from currency.

*Larry Darby  
Montgomery, AL*

## Judges took proper stand on pledge

Rabid theists have decried a federal court's long overdue and proper ruling that the words "under God" in the loyalty oath are unconstitutional. Two brave, patriotic judges took rightful steps to halt the deterioration of religious liberty in America, guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, specifically by the constitutional principle of separation between government and religion.

That government should endorse religion, in any sense, is conspicuously absent from the Constitution.

Another supreme law of the land, the Treaty with Tripoli, reads, "As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion ..."

The writings of Jefferson, Madison, Washington and Adams show our nation was intended to be free from the quagmire of faith-based governments of Europe, spawned from the Dark Age of Catholic domination.

American citizens need neither a loyalty oath nor an official religious slogan. Congress must act now to restore "E Pluribus Unum" and simultaneously remove "God" from currency.

American atheists challenged the government's religious sloganeering in 1978. In *O'Hair vs. Blumenthal*, the court opined, "Its use is of a patriotic or ceremonial character and bears no true resemblance to a governmental sponsorship of religious exercise."

Ceremonial deism and religious sloganeering subvert the Constitution because they are coercive acts by government, forcing 26 million atheist Americans to daily acknowledge the state God. Subversion of the Constitution is not just an attack on the American way of life, but an attack on the foundation of our government.

That, citizens, is treasonous.

*Larry Darby  
Montgomery, AL*

## The intention to indoctrinate is clear

The author of a July 13 letter ("Religion and God are not the same") eloquently argues that the inclusion of the phrase "under God" does not constitute an endorsement of religion.

He correctly acknowledges that the Constitution "prohibits favoring one religion over another." Later, he makes the contradictory claim that "the Constitution does not bar the state from endorsing monotheism."

Which is it? Monotheism is a decidedly incomplete set of religions.

The author started with correct premises in order to sound fair and logical. Then, he deftly reversed positions to arrive at the conclusion he was looking for. A verbal two-step cannot disguise the obvious fact that the phrase "under God" not only endorses religion in general, but unacceptably favors particular religions — to the exclusion of Muslims who worship Allah, deists who acknowledge a lower-case god, dozens of multitheistic religions, and the godless 14 percent of Americans.

The facade of tolerance promulgated by letters such as this is betrayed by President Eisenhower's own words when he signed the "under God" alteration into law in 1954: "Millions of our schoolchildren will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty."

The intention to indoctrinate could not be any clearer.

*Charlie George  
Alpharetta, GA*

From Constance Edwards: (constancedwards@yahoo.com)

## Business Listings for the Freethought Directory

If you are an Atheist or Freethought Professional, and would like to be listed as such in the Freethought Directory, please email me your contact information as you would like it to read. I am specifically looking for physicians, nurse practitioners, attorneys, accountants, and similar services; however no listing will be ignored, as long as you meet the Freethought qualification.

Since this will be an unpaid listing, please limit your listing to Name of Business, Name, Specific practice, Telephone, address and email address.

Regards,  
Constance Edwards  
720.217.9370  
11700 E. South Boulder Rd. #420  
Lafayette CO 80026  
constancedwards@yahoo.com

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# Letters to the Editor from AFS members

Don Peterson's letter was in the *Westview* newspaper (Franklin, TN) on July 11.

To the Editor:

As someone who lived through the McCarthy era that saw a Communist under every bed and behind every door, I understood the atmosphere of the day that permitted "under God" to be placed in our Pledge of Allegiance.

If anyone has any doubts as to the intent of the language, "under God", read the following comment by President Eisenhower regarding the new language: "...millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty". If that isn't religious intent, what is?

The genius of our founding fathers is clearly demonstrated by the decision of the 9th Circuit Court. It was possible because of the Bill of Rights and one man without

assistance from the ACLU. The Bill of Rights was created to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority. They also created the separation of powers whereby federal judges are insulated from the panic of the moment with life time tenure and not subject to the transient whims of the majority.

Some of our elected officials have made the most outrageous comments regarding this decision. Senator Byrd from West Virginia said if the atheists don't like they can leave. "Ironically, Byrd's Baptist ancestors also were told to like it or leave, first by the established Church of England, then by the established churches in the American colonies". (David Waters, Commercial Appeal and Tennessean, 7-6-02) By the way, Senator Byrd always car-

ries a copy of the Constitution with him. He was stopped not too long ago for speeding. He wiped out the Constitution and got off because he was on his way to "work".

When John Kennedy was campaigning for the presidency in 1959, he stated: "I believe in the absolute separation of church and state".

In terms of numbers Catholics represent the single highest group, Baptists second and non-theists 3rd with over 23,000,000 adults, eighteen and older. As long as we remain a secular society we can all get along. No one, no group should force their religious viewpoint on the rest.

Robin Williams: We are really "under Canada".

Sincerely,  
Don Peterson

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## Phil Donahue Takes a Stand for SOCAS

In his article on the MSNBC website, TV personality Phil Donahue took a positive stand for the separation of Church and State. Below are some quotes from the article. The complete article is at [www.msnbc.com/news/779672.asp](http://www.msnbc.com/news/779672.asp).

RELIGION AND DEVOTION to God should, like St. Paul's charity, not be puffed up. God does not reward the loudest voice. Moreover, the "under God" inclusion in the pledge is, as the much-maligned majority in the Ninth Federal Circuit ruled, unconstitutional...

The Separation clause ensures the continued vitality of the state and of religion. It ensures that religion will remain a private choice free of state promotion or interference.

And it is working.

America is the most religious society in history. We sing in more church choirs, attend more church services, throw more holy water and burn more incense than any other national community in the history of civilization.

God bless us for that.

But please, keep worship out of the government's hands. Calling on God in public ceremonies requires that we choose a certain God, whose God? ("... one nation UNDER ALLAH?")

It is true that God appears on our currency, and prayer recitation opens our sessions of Congress. God is so popu-

lar in the U.S., so woven into the lives of so many American citizens that the task of keeping the First Amendment wall strong is often difficult, complex.

But it is worth the effort; its purpose is noble. It is to ensure that Americans remain free to worship a God of their choice, free to pray in one's home and at one's privately funded place of worship. It ensures that no money from other Americans will benefit someone else's religion. That's no small issue due to the billions in tax exemptions offered to religious institutions. This raises the tax bite of all our citizens.

The First Amendment also affirms the right of citizens to be without any faith at all. To be atheists. The late Madalyn Murray O'Hair used to say on the daytime *Donahue* show, "Your religious deductions are raising my taxes. Worship anything or anyone you please, but don't make me pay for it!"

Our constitution obliges no one to worship, pledge allegiance, or believe in anything, not the flag, not even the United States itself...



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“Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect.” - James Madison, 1774

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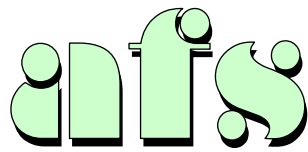
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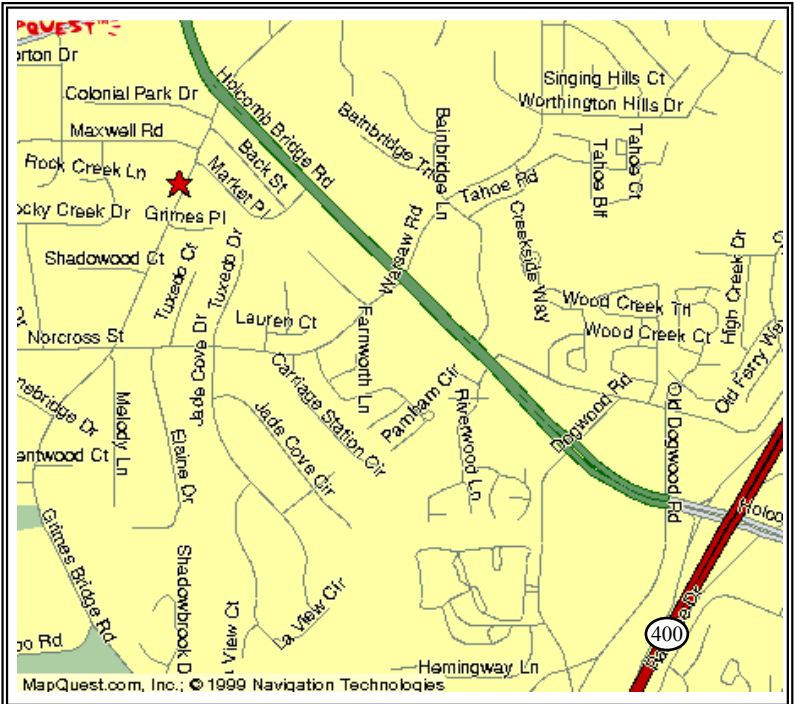
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**The August Meeting:  
Sunday, August 11  
1:00 PM at the AFS Center  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,  
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Reggie Finley**



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