

# Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 8 Number 9 • September 2002

## Our September Meeting

Our September 8 AFS meeting will include a speech by Sam Chupp, whose talk is titled "Much Ado About Harry: Myth & Hysteria in Popular Culture." Sam will talk about how some short-sighted individuals characterize fantasy literature as "occult", and what you can do about it.

Sam is an author and has written and contributed to numerous books. See his website at [www.samchupp.com](http://www.samchupp.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 Rd., which is on the right.

## 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.

## Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the AFS Center at 12:30 on Sunday, September 22.

## 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 October 6 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Highway in Atlanta. For details, see [www.kindreason.com](http://www.kindreason.com).

## Meetings and Activities

Sept 8: AFS General Meeting at AFS Center, 1:00 PM.  
Sept 13: AFS Social, Manual's Tavern, 7:00 PM.  
Sept 14: AFS Hike, Harold's Muscadine Vineyard, 11:00.  
Sept 15: AFS Discussion Group at AFS Center, 4:00 PM.  
Sept 20: Dinner at Funny Farm Comedy Club, 7:30 PM.  
Sept 22: Humanists of Georgia at AFS Center, 12:30 PM.  
Oct 6: Fellowship of Reason meets at NUUC, 12:30 PM.

## AFS Activities

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, September 15, from 4 to 6 PM at the AFS Center.

The next **AFS Hike** will actually be more of an excursion than a hike. On Saturday, September 14, we will meet at 11:00 at the McDonald's Restaurant on Piedmont across from the Lindburgh-Marta station. From there, we will car-pool to Harrell's Muscadine Vineyard at Powers Crossroads, about 10 miles west of Newnan. They have several varieties of grapes for us to pick at about half the market price. For details, call Lew Southern at 770-509-8272.

The next **AFS Social** will be at Manual's Tavern at 602 N. Highland Avenue on Friday, September 13, at 7:00 PM.

To get there, take I-75/85 to the downtown area of Atlanta and exit at North Avenue. Go east about 2 miles to Highland Avenue. Manual's Tavern is at that corner.

The **AFS Activity Night** will be on Friday, September 20, at the Funny Farm Comedy Club, 608 Holcomb Bridge Rd, Roswell, GA (1/2 mile from AFS Center). Dinner is at 7:30; the show starts at 9:00. The cost is \$7 plus meal expenses.

## Board Members Needed

AFS is in search of additional board members. We also have a Treasurer position to fill. If you are interested in any of these positions, please notify an AFS officer.

## Fellowship of Reason New Website

The Fellowship of Reason (FOR), a non-theistic society based in Atlanta, Georgia, has launched their official website at <http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.

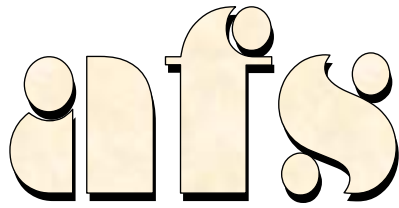
FOR is a rational moral community whose members share a belief in Reason as the best method of achieving happiness; in the primacy of freedom, individual rights and individual responsibility; and in the practice of benevolence toward one's fellow human beings.

The Fellowship of Reason also produces a monthly internet audio broadcast hosted by member John Snider which can be heard on-demand at the FOR website. The August 2002 edition will feature Dr. Michael Newdow, the man behind the controversial lawsuit to remove "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.

FOR was incorporated as a non-profit corporation in February 2002. FOR's founder is Martin L. Cowen III, a retired attorney living in Jonesboro, Georgia. FOR's first President is Dan Barber of Loganville, Georgia.

"Religion supports nobody. It has to be supported. It produces no wheat, no corn; it ploughs no land; it fells no forests. It is a perpetual mendicant. It lives on the labors of others, and then has the arrogance to pretend that it supports the giver."

— Robert G. Ingersoll, from "A Christmas Sermon" printed in the *Evening Telegraph*, Dec. 19, 1891.



**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.

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)

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

Dec 8: TBD

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

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

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Steve Yothment

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For membership and subscription  
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# Freethought News

## COBB COUNTY SUED BY ACLU

On Wednesday, August 21, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the Cobb County school district to remove disclaimers on biological evolution stuck on thousands of middle and high school textbooks.

Pressed by parents opposed to evolution on religious grounds, Georgia's second-largest school district placed the stickers in new science books this past month. The labels say evolution is a theory, not fact, and should be critically considered.

In the lawsuit, the ACLU called the disclaimer a "fundamentalist Christian expression" that promotes religion in public education. The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Atlanta cites the establishment clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits government endorsement of religion.

The challenge was initiated by Jeffrey Selman, an east Cobb father of a public elementary school student. Selman said the school board's decision to put advisories in science texts is a clear attempt to inject religion into public schools.

"It singles out evolution from all the scientific theories out there," he said. "Why single out evolution? It has to be coming from a religious basis, and that violates the separation of church and state."

Across the nation, courts have largely repudiated challenges by creationists, who believe the Genesis account in the Bible is factual.

The issue appeared before the Cobb County school board in March, when several dozen parents asked the board that alternatives be taught. They presented a petition signed by 2,000 county residents, demanding "accuracy" in textbooks.

The board purchased the new textbooks, but agreed to a disclaimer. It reads: "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered."

Initially proposed for three biology texts, the list was expanded last month by district staff to include all science books that touch on evolution. The 11 high school texts include biology, astronomy, environmental science, botany and zoology. The two middle school books are seventh-grade life science and eighth-grade Earth science.

Although the printed labels use vague language, the intention is clear, said Michael Manely, a Marietta attorney who is representing Selman on behalf of the ACLU. "What it does is promote the establishment of creationism in public schools," Manely said. "Why are they singling out evolution? Because from a creation-ist's standpoint, they don't have a problem with the theory of gravity."

Biologists at the largest universities in Georgia petitioned the school board

this summer, unsuccessfully, to stop the disclaimers. The actions taking place in Cobb are politicizing science education, said Ron Matson, assistant chairman of the department of biological and physical science at Kennesaw State University.

"The danger is not that middle and high school teachers will talk about alternative ideas to evolution, but that they will give the material as much scientific weight as evolution," he said. "Or worse still, that they will avoid teaching evolution altogether."

"There is a problem with scientific literacy in this country," he added. "There's a problem in Cobb County. I am worried about science education."

Bob Moore, state science curriculum coordinator, agreed, saying, "Evolution underlies all of biology and is a critical part of science. If that instruction is diluted in Cobb, you'll have a large, major component of science missing. Whether those students will understand the nature of science is questionable."

In Georgia and in Cobb, students consistently have trouble with science on the state high school graduation exam. The most recent scores showed 25 percent of Georgia students failed the section on a first try, while 12 percent did so in Cobb. In contrast, 3 percent of Georgia students and 2 percent of Cobb students failed English.

[ This article condensed from an Aug. 8 article by Mary MacDonald in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.]



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# Freethought News *(continued)*

## COBB COUNTY PROPOSES TEACHING "DISPUTED VIEWS" ON HUMAN ORIGIN

On Thursday, August 22, Cobb County's school board voted unanimously to spend 30 days studying a proposal to allow public school teachers to discuss "disputed views of academic subjects," including human origins. Supporters of the proposal have said the policy would allow science classes to introduce creationism into the curriculum.

As is typical in the strategy promoted by the Discovery Institute, the policy is being painted as a way of being "fair" and "balanced" by pre-senting all theories (in the lay sense of the word) of the origin of species, and by allowing teachers to present supposed "evidence against evolution" in science class.

The text of the policy reads: "...The Cobb County School District believes that the discussion of disputed views of academic subjects is a necessary element of providing a balanced education, including the study of the origin of the species. This subject remains an area of intense interest, research and discussion among scholars. As a result, the study of this subject shall be handled in accordance with this policy and with objectivity and good judgment on the part of teachers, taking into account the age and maturity level of their students."

During a portion of the meeting reserved for public comment, several parents spoke passionately about the issue. "Separation of church and state is a fallacy promoted by the liberal press," parent Russell Brock told the board, urging them to allow creationism to be taught. "We're a Christian nation."

Cobb resident Bill Hart, on the other hand, earned applause from the spectators as he told the board to steer away from broadening classroom discussions of life's origins. "I believe science does not need a disclaimer, or an apology. That compromises the ability to teach science," Hart said. "As a Christian, my faith demands

honesty. It is not honest to present creationism as fact."

After the board meeting, board chairman Curt Johnston told reporters, "We've been told by our attorney we're not allowed to teach creationism. But the point is we want free and open discussion in the classroom and our teachers are nervous about what they can talk about. This will clarify things."

AFS member Eugenie Scott of the National Center for Science Education was interviewed on CNN's Crossfire on August 23 to address the proposal.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United, said the proposal raises constitutional concerns and should be voted down.

"Any proposal encouraging public school teachers to offer religious lessons is wholly inconsistent with the separation of church and state," Lynn said. "The law requires public schools to remain neutral on religion. Injecting creationism into science classes isn't religious neutrality."

"Sunday School lessons masquerading as science have no place in public school classrooms," Lynn added. "This proposal raises serious legal questions and should be swiftly rejected."

Americans United's Legal Department contacted Cobb County officials about the proposed policy. AU attorneys explained that federal courts have consistently ruled that public schools cannot engage in religious indoctrination and warned that board approval of the policy may spark a lawsuit.

The Supreme Court has tackled this issue several times. The high court struck down an Arkansas law banning lessons on evolution in 1968. Justices later ruled against the strategy of giving creationism equal time with evolution in the 1987 *Edwards v. Aguillard* decision.

Despite definitive court rulings on the issue, the Religious Right is engaged in a national crusade to interject creationism — or its latest variant,

"intelligent design" — into public school curricula. This year, for example, the Ohio Board of Education has considered a proposal to introduce creationist principles into its state curriculum. In addition, AU persuaded officials in Joes, Colo., to reject a proposal to introduce creationism into its science classes in April.

The Cobb County board is expected to vote on its controversial proposal at a September 26 meeting.

[This article is from an August 23 Americans United press release and an August 23 article by Mia Taylor in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.]

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## GEORGIA TOWN TAKES DOWN RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS AFTER CIVIL LIBERTIES GROUPS FILE SUIT

Ringgold, GA has taken down religious symbols from its city hall in an attempt to settle a lawsuit brought by civil liberties groups.

The Ringgold City Council removed framed copies of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer from city hall earlier this week. An empty frame that council members said was for "those who believe in nothing" was also removed.

The city government was sued in June of this year by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Georgia affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union. The groups charged that the display, posted in October, violated the constitutional separation of church and state. Two local residents served as plaintiffs in the *Odom v. City of Ringgold* case.

"We're delighted that Ringgold officials have decided to obey the Constitution," said Americans United Legal Director Ayesha Khan. "Americans from all religious perspectives will now feel welcome in city hall."

"The council clearly intended to send a message of religious favoritism when it put up the religious symbols," continued Khan. "By taking them

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# Freethought News *(continued)*

down, they've now sent a message that no particular faith will get special treatment."

Upon unveiling the religious display last fall, Ringgold Councilman Bill McMillon said the empty frame was included in the display "for those who believe in nothing," and that those who took issue with the display of the Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer "can go stand in front of it and believe anything they want to." He added that he was unconcerned about non-Christians or Muslims being offended by the display "because we don't have any of them here."

Now that the religious symbols have been taken down in Ringgold City Hall, Americans United officials are optimistic that the lawsuit pending in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia will be settled.

[From an August 15 Americans United press release.]

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## STATE, NATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS OPPOSE JUDGE MOORE'S COMMANDMENTS DISPLAY

A diverse array of state and national religious leaders has come out in opposition to Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore's display of the Ten Commandments at the state's highest court.

In a legal brief filed on August 21 in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, three national organizations and 42 state clergy from various denominations objected to Moore's government-sponsored religious monument at the Alabama Judicial Building in Montgomery.

"Religion doesn't need government's help, and most clergy know that," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. (AU is not involved in this lawsuit, but has a separate lawsuit against Judge Moore.) "This brief demonstrates that many thoughtful religious leaders in Alabama disagree strongly with Justice Moore's misguided reli-

gious crusade."

Lynn continued, "These religious leaders understand that the Ten Commandments belong in our houses of worship, not our houses of law."

The brief was filed by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a Washington, D.C.-based group that promotes religious liberty. Alabama signers include clergy from the Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ and Jewish traditions. In addition to the Baptist Joint Committee, two other national organizations also signed the brief: the Anti-Defamation League and The Interfaith Alliance.

The religious leaders' brief asserts, "By displaying the Ten Commandments in the State Judicial Building, Justice Moore has usurped the role of private individuals and faith communities in shaping their own religious practices and views. Government efforts to promote religion drain religious practices and beliefs of their spiritual significance, thereby deprecating, rather than revitalizing, religion."

"Rather than strengthening religion," the brief concludes, "the display undermines religious interests: it shows disrespect for the freedom of conscience, tends to degrade and corrupt religion, and engenders social conflict and religious discord. Religion has thrived in the United States precisely because it has been left to the private sphere. Only by preserving this healthy separation between church and state will religion continue to prosper."

Judge Moore is also facing a lawsuit by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Alabama affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union (*Glassroth v. Moore*), arguing that the display violates the separation of church and state. The court action for that lawsuit will commence on October 15.

[From an August 22 Americans United press release.]

## MICHAEL NEWDOW TO SPEAK IN MONTGOMERY

Larry Darby, Alabama state coordinator for American Atheists, has announced that Michael Newdow will speak at a breakfast event on Tuesday morning, October 15, in Montgomery. Mr. Newdow was the plaintiff in the famous court case (*Newdow v. Congress of the United States*) on June 26 in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In that case, the judges ruled that the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional because it amounts to a government endorsement of religion. The event will include a press conference.

Mr. Newdow now also has a lawsuit filed against the US Congress concerning the legality of Senate chaplains. (See the article below.)

The Montgomery speaking event is on the morning of the opening of the trial of Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy S. Moore.

For more information, email Larry at [ldarby@atheists.org](mailto:ldarby@atheists.org).

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## ATHEIST EYES CONGRESSIONAL CHAPLAINS

The California atheist who challenged the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is now going after taxpayer-funded chaplains in Congress.

"If they want a pep talk, then go get a football coach...but stop getting chaplains and religious folks to come in. It's forbidden," Michael Newdow, a Sacramento-based lawyer and physician, said in an interview on August 30.

In a suit filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, DC last week, Newdow said House and Senate chaplain positions compromise a constitutional ban on government-sponsored religion and religious requirements for public servants. The suit names as defendants the Congress and other administrators.

Newdow's suit seeks to abolish the jobs, but makes no specific request for damages.

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# Freethought News *(continued)*

"It's a civil rights case ... atheists are second-class citizens in this society," Newdow said.

"Even if (the chaplains) weren't getting paid, it's wrong for government to be saying that there's a God. These are religious ideals and the government's not supposed to be weighing in."

Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said most people are "comforted by the fact that our chaplains lead us in seeking guidance from a superior power."

All House and Senate chaplains since 1789 have been Christians, the lawsuit notes. The House chaplain now earns \$148,500, and the Senate chaplain makes \$130,000.

[From an August 30 Associated Press article by Danny Freedman.]

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## WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL DISTRICT RESCINDS GRADUATION PRAYER POLICY

The American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia and Americans United for Separation of Church and State applauded the decision of the Kanawha County (W.Va.) School Board to end a policy that permitted school-sponsored prayer at graduation ceremonies. U.S. District Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr. approved a settlement between the parties on August 14.

"The resolution of this lawsuit guarantees the religious liberty of every family in the community," said Ayesha Khan, legal director of Americans United. "Thankfully, the new policy will strike the right balance. Students will be free to pray if they wish during graduation, but to protect everyone's rights, worship will no longer be an official part of the ceremony."

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Tyler Deveny on May 29, 2002. Deveny, an atheist, objected to the prayer at his graduation at St. Albans High School which he called "an exer-

cise in ostracism." The ACLU and Americans United successfully won a temporary restraining order blocking the prayer the next day.

On August 14, the Superintendent of the Kanawha County Schools, Ron Duerring, agreed in the settlement to immediately abolish the district-wide policy that permitted schools like St. Albans to have student-led prayer at their graduation. Duerring said in a statement, "Such an outcome is best for the school community and pays proper respect to constitutional requirements."

Shortly after the May 30 graduation ceremony took place, Deveny was assaulted allegedly because of his participation in the case. The ACLU, AU and the superintendent strongly condemned the assault.

"Mr. Deveny was exercising an important constitutional right to seek redress for alleged violations of the Constitution," Duerring said in his statement. "Mr. Deveny's actions have served to educate Kanawha County Schools and the community as a whole about constitutional requirements."

In connection with the settlement, Duerring will review Kanawha County curriculum and professional staff development programs to ensure adequate education and training on First Amendment issues, particularly the separation of church and state and freedom of religion.

[From an August 14 AU press release.]

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## VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE'S PRAYER POLICY UNCONSTITUTIONAL, AU TELLS FEDERAL APPEALS COURT

The Virginia Military Institute's policy of school-sponsored pre-dinner prayers for cadets is unconstitutional, Americans United for Separation of Church and State has told a federal appeals court.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed on August 19 with the U.S. 4th Circuit

Court of Appeals, Americans United and two allied organizations outlined their opposition to the school's worship policy and urged the appeals court to uphold a lower court ruling that struck down the school's practice.

"At a public school, students should not be pressured to recite a prayer they may or may not agree with," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, AU's executive director. "Cadets at VMI should worship based on the dictates of their consciences, not the command of school administrators."

The legal controversy in *Mellen v. Bunting* centers on the publicly funded military school's practice of composing official prayers and encouraging cadets to recite the prayer before meals at VMI's mess hall. As part of the policy, a "cadet chaplain" recites the prayer while the other students are required to stand at attention.

The case was brought by the Virginia affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of two cadets, Neil Mellen and Paul Knick, who objected to the religious exercises.

Earlier this year, a federal district court struck down the school's religious exercise. U.S. District Judge Norman Moon concluded that the prayers are "drafted and recited" at the direction of the school, and as such, "the result is that government has become impermissibly entangled with religion."

Americans United's brief, which was also submitted on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee, says, "[T]he United States must maintain its commitment to separation between the state and religion.... In fashioning its American 'citizen-soldiers,' VMI should stand at the forefront of preserving the First Amendment rights to true religious liberty and freedom of conscience."

[From an August 20 AU press release.]

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"With soap, baptism is a good thing." — Robert G. Ingersoll

"My country is the world, and my religion is to do good." — Thomas Paine

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# The Godless Americans March on Washington

As reported in the August Atlanta Freethought News, a "Godless Americans March on Washington" has been scheduled for Saturday, November 2, at our nation's capital. The march is being coordinated by American Atheists. Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists, has invited all non-religious groups to attend and participate in the march.

The march has solid support by many non-religious groups. The Council for Secular Humanism and the Atheist Alliance have both en-

dorsed the march. (AFS is a member society of the CSH and the Atheist Alliance.)

In a letter to AFS and many other groups, Johnson states that "our goal is to bring together members of diverse godless organizations that represent some of the 30 million Americans who have no religious faith in an unprecedented show of solidarity on the Capitol Mall."

The rally is scheduled for 11 AM to 2-3 PM, and will include speeches, entertainment and other activities.

The march will begin on the mall near 14<sup>th</sup> Street, at the Washington Monument. Participants will assemble there and make a roughly 20 minute march straight down the mall to a demonstration/stage site which will be between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues. A representative of each group will each have a few minutes to speak.

Details and updates on the march can be found on the march's website, [www.godlessamericans.org](http://www.godlessamericans.org).

Below is a Statement of Principles drafted by the march organizers.

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## GAM Participants — Some Groups Questioned

Two of the groups that have signed up to participate in the Godless Americans March are the Order of Perdition and the United Satanic Convenire, which describe themselves as Satanist groups. American Atheists is taking endorsers at their word that they are "Godless Americans." However, in a New York Times article on August 17 by Peter Steinfels, Tom Flynn of the Council for Secular Humanism was quoted to say "Satanism is a religion, with supernatural beliefs and a belief in the occult. They (the two Satanist groups) should not qualify as endorsers of an event for Godless Americans."

The United Satanic Convenire responded with a long comment on its Web site. An unidentified leader of the group described himself, or herself, as "a disbeliever in the existence of a metaphysical being called 'God.'" Some Satanists have a deistic view of Satan, it was explained, but apparently not this one. The Convenire promised it would not arrive in Washington waving "pentagrams and other occult paraphernalia."

Even so, Ed Buckner, the council's executive director (and former AFS president), said, "The issue is not closed, but the council is going full force forward with support for the march."

The problem, he said, "was partly a public relations thing" — Christian preachers frequently denounced nonbelievers as satanic. But there was more to it, he continued: Satanism dallies with supernatural beliefs that most atheists simply do not entertain. Groups that use invocations like "Hail Lucifer!" — as the Order of Perdition does — are definitely "not our style," he said.

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## Godless Americans March on Washington — Statement of Principles —

- \* We demand equal rights including fair treatment and protection in the workplace; when seeking public office and the right to serve on juries and give testimony; and in having a voice in the halls of Congress, in our state legislatures and in other government venues.
- \* We call for an end to discrimination against Atheists, Freethinkers and other Godless Americans in organizations which receive public funds and special entitlements, such as the Boy Scouts of America. Non-belief must not be a litmus test for inclusion in such groups.
- \* We demand an end to harassment and other violations of our rights in public schools. Prayer bullying, organized prayer and other forms of coercive religion cannot be tolerated in what should be a totally secular public school system. Public schools must not become centers for religious proselytizing, the unconstitutional promotion of religion through teaching so-called creationism, or smuggling sectarian beliefs into the schools through ruses as student-led prayer.
- \* We call for an end to the use of government tax money to subsidize religious denominations, faith-based social programs and other entitlement schemes.
- \* We demand an end to the exclusion of Atheists, Freethinkers and other Godless Americans as full citizens of this nation. Our leaders, including the President, must stop calling the nation to prayer, or claim that we are a Christian country. Godless Americans have been patriotic, and many have served — and now serve — in our nation's armed forces. We are fire and rescue personnel, emergency crisis personnel, white-collar and blue-collar workers. We insist on inclusion when this nation is rallied to appropriate causes!
- \* We call for an end to the display of religious mottoes and symbols on government property, and especially in public schools. We also call for the restoration of E Pluribus Unum, (Out of Many, One) as the secular, national motto of a free people.

# Letters to the Editor

## from AFS Members

### Religious liberty not Moore's goal

An Aug. 1 Associated Press article reported that Roy Moore called for Christians to stand up and fight for their religious rights in elections. Moore was speaking to the Christian Coalition, a political organization hostile to constitutional guarantees of religious liberty.

Has Moore never read Alabama's Canons of Judicial Ethics, or have they been suspended for the duration of his tenure as chief justice? Would Moore give the same advice to citizens who are atheist, Jewish or Muslim?

No intellectually honest person knowledgeable of history, law and religion believes Moore is detached from his religious bigotry while performing his duties as a judge.

Consider Moore's own words in Family Voice magazine: "In fact, I find that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is founded on a belief that we have a duty to worship God."

Moore longs for a theocratic government, not our constitutional republic with its guarantees of religious liberty. Politicians in the executive and legislative branches share complicity in ongoing assaults against the foundation of our government, too.

Will a Christian Inquisition in Alabama be necessary before citizens know and understand what is happening to religious and other liberties?

Larry Darby  
Alabama state director  
American Atheists Inc.  
Montgomery

### Stunned by Cobb's move

DEAR EDITOR:

I was stunned to read that the teachings of scientific creationism and/or intelligent design are being considered in Cobb County schools. I find this to be an outrage.

First, the very term "scientific creationism" is an oxymoron. The only way for any explanation to be considered scientific is if it was formulated via the scientific method. Thus, it must have been conceived as a falsifiable hypothesis, substantial credible evidence must exist to support it, and it must have passed rigorous and critical peer review. Creationism tenets follow the antithesis of each of these criteria.

Secondly, the mere idea of associating true scientific curriculum with this sort of religious claptrap will only serve to expose Cobb County schools to the same sort of ridicule that the state of Kansas experienced a few short years ago when their state school board tried to implement similar measures. (It is important to note that those Kansas measures have now wisely been reversed, and that many of the members of those responsible were removed from public office in the last election.)

Lastly, it is unconscionable to me that the intelligent design supporters would choose the public schools as the battleground for their assaults on reason. If they are so convinced that "intelligent design" has enough merit as to be considered respectable science, then they should choose the halls of academia as the location to tout their claims, not the biology classes of our impressionable youths.

Ried Crowe  
Powder Springs

### Pledge debate

The decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals, finding the "one nation under God" portion of the Pledge of Allegiance to be flag unconstitutional, should have been welcomed by those who believe that the U.S. Constitution is, perhaps, the fairest political contract ever created by man.

Unfortunately, however, jingoism, religious furor, a "my gang" mentality and political pandering of the worst sort prevent most Americans from realizing this point.

The court appears to have acquiesced to public demonstrations of faith and will reconsider its decision.

Our so-called founding fathers were products of an age when religious intolerance, and wars between differing religious factions, caused most of the human misery.

Many of those who immigrated to this county did so supposedly for religious freedom — and our founding fathers attempted, through the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, to do what they could to minimize religious intolerance in our new country.

The First Amendment to the Constitution states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that requiring students to recite a pledge including "One Nation under God" violated that amendment, and it is clear that it does.

But the public feels otherwise.

If the majority, who believe in God, want to make that requirement the rule of the land, there is a proper way to do it — amend the Constitution to reflect this demand.

Let's have an open debate, among our elected officials, as to why the rights of Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, agnostics, humanists, free thinkers and any religious groups that have more Gods than one, should have their rights to religious freedom usurped by the majority who believe in one God.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the U.S. Constitution was the effort to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority.

Public opinion polls, however, continuously demonstrate that the majority would eliminate the freedoms of the press, and speech — especially if the press or someone's words were objectionable to that majority.

And the rights of religious minorities appear to be the most vulnerable of all.

If the majority has their way — without the protection of our Constitution and Bill of Rights — majority rule would result in the end of our democracy.

Logically, if Christians, and others who believe in God, vote to enable our government to make a pledge to God part of the requirements to attend our public schools, then the tyranny of the majority has been permitted to violate the spirit of the U.S. Constitution; and our other basic rights will then become much more vulnerable to majority rule.

We are a pluralistic society and the circuit court decision reflects and respects that reality.

WILLIAM DUSENBERRY  
2374 Cross Timbers Drive  
Mount Pleasant

Larry Darby's letter was in the *Birmingham News* on August 9.

Ried Crowe's letter was in the *Marietta Daily Journal* on September 1.

Bill Dusenberry's letter was in the *Charleston, SC Post and Courier* on July 16.



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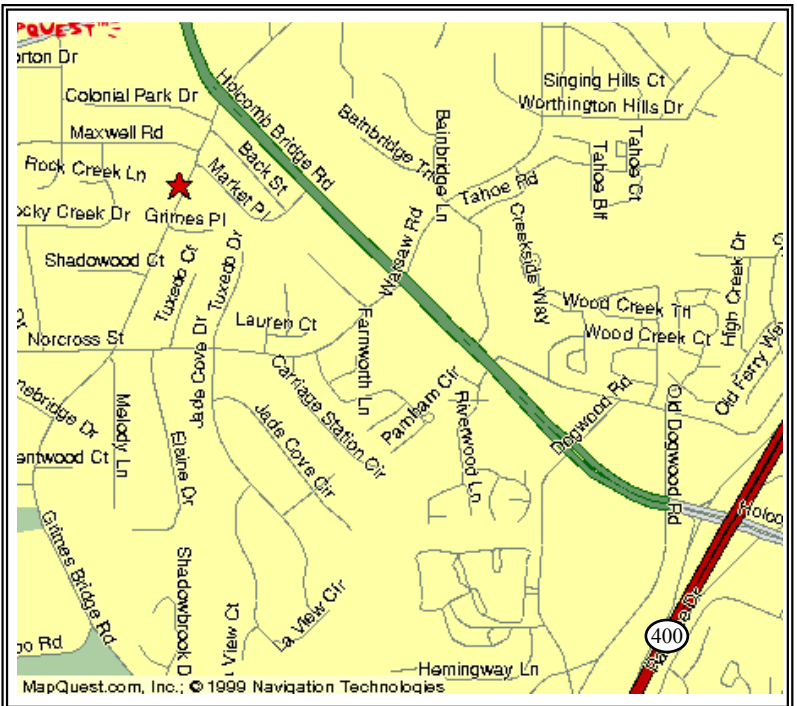
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<p><b>Why I Am Not A Christian — \$9</b></p> <p>Lucid, comprehensive, engaging answer to Christian apologists by Keith Parsons. Respectful but devastating to all Christian claims. Wonderful follow-up to Bertrand Russell's great essay with the same title.</p>
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**The September Meeting:  
Sunday, September 8  
1:00 PM at the AFS Center  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,  
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Sam Chupp**



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