

Atlanta Freethought News

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Our May Meeting

Our May 11 meeting will feature AFS member Donna Gore, speaking on "(Twelve) Stepping on the First Amendment." Her talk will be about Alcoholics Anonymous and the problem of judges requiring people to attend their religion-based meetings.

The meeting will be at 1:00 at the **Atlanta Freethought 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.

AFS Activities

The **AFS Hike** will be at 11:00 on Saturday, May 10, 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 next **AFS Social** will be at Las Margaritas Restaurant at 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, May 16, at 7:00 PM. To get there, take I-85 to the Cheshire Bridge Road exit (Exit 88) on the north side of Atlanta. Turn east at the light and go about 1.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the right.

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, May 18, at 4:00 to 6:00 PM at the Atlanta Freethought Center.

The **Tuesday Lunch Bunch** meets every Tuesday for lunch at Panahar Restaurant. Please note the **new meeting time: 12:30 PM**. The address is 3375 Buford Hwy, Suite 1060, in Atlanta. Come on down and enjoy the Bangladeshi food buffet and the great company.

SOS Meets at AFS Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the Atlanta Freethought 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 have their next meeting at 12:30 PM on June 1 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see www.fellowshipofreason.com.

Charleston's Day of Reason

Congratulations to Herb Silverman and the Secular Humanists of the Low Country. They convinced the mayor of Charleston, SC, to issue the following proclamation declaring May 1, 2003, as Charleston's **Day of Reason**. The proclamation was read in a Charleston park on May 1. SHLC members also took turns presenting statements in support of reason, tolerance, democracy, and human rights.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS; the foundational documents of our great nation incorporated for the first time in history, a commitment to the principles of reason, tolerance, democracy and human rights, and

WHEREAS; the consistent application of reason offers hope that we may resolve the many challenges facing humanity, whether environmental, military, economic or social, and will enable moral and ethical interactions among people and their environment, and

WHEREAS; the City of Charleston has been a leader in the fields of endeavor that rely on reason, including scientific and medical research, social reform, democratic government, fair elections, and human rights.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Joseph P. Riley, Mayor of Charleston, by virtue of the power of the office vested in me by the citizens of Charleston, do hereby proclaim Thursday, May 1, 2003, as a

DAY OF REASON

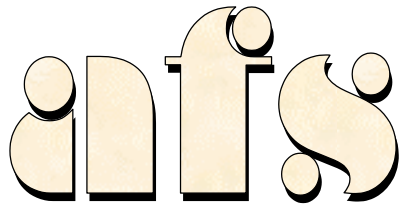
and encourage all citizens, residents and visitors to join in observing this day and focusing on the employment of reason, critical thought, the scientific method, and free inquiry to resolve human problems and care for the welfare of humankind.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Charleston to be affixed this 16th day of April.

[signed] Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Mayor

AFS Meetings and Activities

May 10: AFS Hike, Chattahoochee River NRA, 11:00 AM
May 11: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM
May 16: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM
May 18: AFS Board Meeting, AF Center, 2:00 PM
May 18: AFS Discussion Group, AF Center, 4:00 PM



**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.

May 11: AFS member Donna Gore will speak on "(Twelve) Stepping on the First Amendment."

June 8: Hervey Peoples of Longboat Key, FL, will speak on "Evolutionists vs. Creationists." Hervey recently published her book *The Human Question*, which is the first place winner of the Florida Writers Association Book Awards for Nonfiction.

July 13: TBD

To join the AFS Forum e-mail list, send a blank message to AFSforum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To join the AFS Announcements list, send a blank email to afs-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To join the Georgia Freethinkers Letter Writing Cooperative, send a blank email to flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to 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**

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Steve Yothment

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information, contact AFS at:
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Pledge and Prayer Amendment Threatens Religious Freedom

By Kimberly Blaker, editor and coauthor of *The Fundamentals of Extremism: the Christian Right in America*

Republican Rep. Ernest Istook, known for his failed Religious Freedom Amendment (RFA) and other similar radical proposals, is back at it. Earlier this month, along with Democrat Rep. Sanford Bishop and 88 other cosponsors, Istook introduced the "Pledge and Prayer Amendment," H.J. Res. 46.

Istook's ongoing pursuit of dangerous amendments under the guise of religious freedom reveals his lack of regard for religious freedom in its truest sense. Deceiving language, as always, is used to lure an uninformed populace into favoring his proposed amendment.

The wording is as follows: "To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: The people retain the right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, and traditions on public property, including schools. The United States and the States shall not establish any official religion nor require any person to join in prayer or religious activity."

But our Bill of Rights already contains a religious freedom amendment – the First – which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . ."

Yet this doesn't satisfy the Christian Right because the First Amendment protects the freedom of *all* Americans, while providing a wall between church and state. What the religious right wants is the freedom to proselytize in public schools and all government arenas – and it wants to use our tax dollars in doing so. It favors conservative Christian religious freedom,

not the freedom to believe and practice as each American chooses.

At first glance, the proposed amendment appears harmless, but when dissected, serious flaws are uncovered. The first line, "To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience:..." (identical to the wording in the failed RFA) doesn't allow for the freedom *not* to acknowledge God or to acknowledge many Gods, Budd-ha, or any other divine figure. By specifically using the term *God*, rather than *religion* as the First Amendment does, it creates a very illusive and different meaning.

The next phrase, "The people retain the right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, and traditions on public property, including schools," again, is a near-duplication of the wording of the RFA. But, the First Amendment already allows children to pray silently in the classroom and at lunch-time and even to form prayer groups before and after school on school grounds.

We also already have the freedom to pray silently at government meetings and in courtrooms; to use public schools, parks, and other facilities for religious gatherings; and to practice religion in our homes and churches. But the proposed Amendment would allow students and even administrators and teachers to invoke prayer and Bible readings in the classroom and to proselytize.

The one part of this proposal that suggests protection for others, "The United States and the States shall not establish any official religion nor require any person to join in prayer or

religious activity ..." is already a protection under the First Amendment. But, the particular wording of the rest of the proposed Amendment, as described, would render this part meaningless.

The fact that government shall not "establish" or "require" religious activity wouldn't prevent minority students from feeling compelled when classmates or teachers are invoking or participating in classroom prayer. Would a child choose not to participate in a religious ritual, he or she would likely be ostracized, as has historically been the case when religion and prayer enter the public classroom.

Particularly revealing of the intent of this amendment is that the right to post the Ten Commandments in public schools and other public facilities is one of its stated purposes. Not only has Istook acknowledged this, but it's included as part of the joint resolution.

The Pledge and Prayer Amendment, if ratified, would break down the wall between church and state, destroying religious freedom. Given the atmosphere since 9-11, our current war on Iraq, and Republican control in the House, Senate, and the Presidency, it seems a frightening possibility such an extreme measure could pass, unless the American people take a stand. The Pledge and Prayer Amendment is blatantly nothing more than an attack on religious freedom that Americans currently possess. Let's fight to keep it that way.

[For details on Kimberly's book, see <http://www.NewBostonBooks.com>.

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"A nation of well informed men who have been taught to know and prize [their] rights...cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins."

– Benjamin Franklin

"The real cause of personal existence is not the favor of the Almighty, but the sexual love of one's earthly parents."

– Ernst Heinrich Haeckel

The “Clergy Protection Bill”

Members of the Alabama House of Representatives voted 92-2 on April 8 to approve a bill that would add members of the clergy to its lengthy list of professionals who, by law, must report known or suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities.

House Bill 262 is quickly making its way through the Legislature. The bill was approved by the House Judiciary Committee with an amendment that would require authorities to expunge the record of an accused person who is found innocent of abuse.

Recent incidents of alleged abuse and sexual misconduct by Alabama priests have spawned a wave of support for the legislation. Current law requires professionals such as teachers, doctors, social workers and even coroners to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor, presenting himself as an avid proponent of the bill, expressed approval of the vote.

“I commend the House of Representatives for acting... to protect children by adding clergy to the list of those required to report suspected child abuse,” Pryor said. “I am optimistic that the Senate also will give its approval to this important legislation. Child sexual abuse is a vile crime, which must be taken seriously, reported and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

At least, that is what was presented to Alabama citizens in the newspapers. But there is another side to this story. While the bill would require all clergy to report known or suspected child abuse, it does not prevent priests from withholding such knowledge if it is told to them in confession.

Rep. Alan Boothe, D-Troy, originated the bill. He noted that current law protects the communication between priest and parishioner, similar to attorney-client privilege. The bill does not change this protection.

“It’s a protection of the sanctity of confession,” Boothe said. “We would be getting into the sanctity of the con-

fession if we tried to do that.”

Montgomery resident Vicky Downey, a member of St. Peter’s Church, said she supports the bill that would make clergymen just as responsible for reporting known and suspected child abuse or neglect as other professionals. But she also said that priests with knowledge of abuse should not view the protection of the confessional as “a loophole” or way of getting around reporting suspected or known abuse.

The issue hit home in Alabama when Pryor’s former priest, the Rev. Alexander J. Sherlock of St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Montgomery, was removed from the priesthood last month by Catholic Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb of the Mobile archdiocese.

In a report that shocked Sherlock’s parishioners, Lipscomb told the congregation that Sherlock had admitted to three incidents of sexual abuse of minors and that a fourth allegation against Sherlock also had surfaced.

According to the archbishop, the first allegation came in 1997, and Sherlock requested a transfer to Montgomery. Lipscomb said he granted the move after Sherlock agreed to psychological therapy.

Shortly after the Sherlock dismissal, Lipscomb relieved another former Montgomery priest, the Rev. Authur Schrenger, of his duties after the priest confirmed two instances of misconduct with minors prior to 1985. Schrenger was assigned to Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Montgomery in 1987 and remained there until 1999.

The increasing number of cases across the nation has been accompanied by public outcry against Catholic leaders who allowed some priests to remain in parishes even after admitting to such abuse.

The bill does not change the situation. Church authorities can continue to hide their knowledge of child abuse and claim that any such knowledge was gained under confession, protecting them from prosecution for failure to report the child abuse.

Larry Darby, Alabama State Director for American Atheists, stated in an email on the AFS Forum email list that atheists should oppose the legislation.

“At first glance, many people might believe this proposed law is a good thing. But despite claims of a few members of the Alabama House that it is a violation of the constitutional principle of separation between religion and government, this bill (HB 262), if made into law, could be used by clergy, particularly Catholic clergy, to keep silent when they have knowledge of child abuse perpetrated by their fellow clergy, or in other circumstances. It appears to me that your legislators assume clergy can or will do no wrong.”

“...I believe the Free Exercise of religion should not be extended to protect criminal activity by clergy, including cover-up by higher ranking officers.”

“I believe this Bill should be entitled ‘Clergy Protection Bill,’ as it clears the way for priests, archbishops, bishops, cardinals, and the pope (as well as clergy of other sects) to keep silent in matters of known or suspected child abuse in Alabama. And we should not forget that these persons are all agents of a foreign, subversive government embedded in America, the Vatican – a government known to be hostile to traditional American values. By extending such government protection to these foreign operatives, the “Church” is also potentially or effectively shielded from some civil lawsuits, often the best way to get to the heart of papal power, in Alabama and elsewhere.”

“Keep in mind that priests or other clergy have been known to terrorize children into silence, by the usual threats of burning eternally in hell, and so on.”

“Your Alabama Legislature might be too stupid to realize it, but HB 262 and the Senate companion bill is attempting to make a law that affords protection to clergy. They have not learned from the national scandal of the past few years!”

Supreme Court Rejects Appeal on Ten Commandments

On April 28, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal by Kentucky of a ruling that barred the display of a large granite monument with the Ten Commandments on the state Capitol grounds in Frankfort.

Without comment, the justices let stand a federal appeals court ruling that the display would violate church-state separation under the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment.

Back in 2000, the governor signed into law a resolution adopted by the state legislature that required placement of the monument outside the Capitol building. The monument is about six feet tall and four feet wide.

At the top of the monument are the words, "I AM the LORD thy God" followed by the commandments, a sacred and religious text for Jews and Christians. At the bottom are two small Stars of David and a symbol representing Christ.

The monument was given to the

state in 1971 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles. It was displayed until 1980, when it was removed to make room for construction. It has remained in storage since then.

The American Civil Liberties Union and five individuals, including a rabbi and three ministers, sued in 2000, claiming the required display was unconstitutional.

A federal judge and then the appeals court agreed, barring the state from erecting the monument on the Capitol grounds because it would be an unconstitutional governmental endorsement of religion.

Kentucky Attorney General Albert Chandler appealed to the Supreme Court. He said the 2000 law required an overall public display of historic documents that included the Ten Commandments.

Alabama, Indiana, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and

Utah supported Kentucky's appeal.

The states said the permissibility of governmental displays of the Ten Commandments raised a question of "national importance." They urged the high court to hold that governments may have such displays to acknowledge the Ten Commandments' historical role in American culture and law.

The ACLU replied that the appeal should be denied. It said the appeals court applied well-settled principles of law in determining the monument would impermissibly endorse religion.

Last year, the Supreme Court rejected a similar appeal by Indiana arguing that it should be allowed to erect a limestone monument with the Ten Commandments on the statehouse lawn in Indianapolis.

[From an April 28 Reuters News Agency article by James Vicini.]

Date Set for Appeal of Judge Moore's Monument

The U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to rule on the appeal of the Kentucky Ten Commandments monument decision has special significance to people in Alabama. A federal appeals court has set a date and time for hearing arguments in the appeal of a judge's order that a Ten Commandments monument be removed from the lobby of the Alabama Judicial Building.

Officials at the U.S. 11th Circuit

Court of Appeals notified Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore on April 11 that the appeals court would hear arguments at 9 a.m. June 4 at the federal courthouse in Montgomery, said Tom Parker, Moore's spokesman.

Moore is appealing the decision of U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson, who ordered the 5,300-pound monument removed from the lobby of the judicial building after a 7-day trial last year. Moore had the monument moved

into the lobby on July 31, 2001, saying the commandments represent the moral foundation of American law.

Moore was sued by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Southern Poverty Law Center and Americans United for Separation of Church and State on behalf of three Alabama attorneys, who said the monument violated their Constitutional rights.

[From an April 11 Associated Press article.]



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Groups Prepare for Appeals Court Hearing

Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore's display of the Ten Commandments in the state Judicial Building violates the U.S. Constitution, Americans United has told a federal appeals court.

In an appellees' brief filed April 14, attorneys with Americans United, the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama and the Southern Poverty Law Center asked the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold a lower court ruling and require Moore to remove the religious monument.

The lawyers argued that Moore clearly intended to endorse religion through his display of the Decalogue. The brief asserted, "Chief Justice Moore erected the Ten Commandments monument to acknowledge the 'ultimate authority' of the Christian God, and to encourage viewers to obey the 'absolute standards' that the monument depicts. These are unabashedly religious purposes."

Elsewhere, the brief asserted that Moore's view of the relationship between the states and the federal government is outmoded and extreme.

"In a glaring act of hubris, Moore argues that if the federal courts do not adopt his extremist view of [separation of church and state], he is not obliged to comply with their orders," read the brief. "This argument runs afoul of longstanding principles of federalism and is an invitation to anarchy."

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, said the federal courts must reject Moore's arguments.

"Moore is essentially arguing that states don't have to abide by the Constitution," Lynn said. "This is an extreme position that no federal court is going to take seriously."

Continued Lynn, "It's time for Moore to join the 21st century and quit trying to use his courtroom to promote religion."

Baptist, Jewish and Arab groups also filed written arguments with the federal appeals court in opposition to a Ten Commandments monument in the state Judicial Building.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which is not supported by the nation's largest Baptist group, the Southern Baptist Convention, told the court that religion has thrived in America "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," said K. Hollyn Hollman of Washington, an attorney for the Baptist group.

Among those joining in the Baptist group's "friend-of-court" brief were the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, the Interfaith Alliance and several Alabama clergymen.

"Many faith communities in Alabama, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims, do not adhere to the tenets of Judaism or Christianity and thus do not share the faith from which the Ten Commandments are taken," Hollman wrote.

Hollman urged the appeals court to

affirm U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson's Nov. 18 ruling that the monument placed by Chief Justice Roy Moore in the judicial building's rotunda is an unconstitutional state establishment of religion.

A separate brief filed by New York attorney Marc D. Stern on behalf of the American Jewish Congress said Moore's monument "systematically prefers Protestant Christianity over other religious groupings" because it quotes the commandments from the King James Version of the Bible.

Another brief on behalf of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, a non-sectarian, non-partisan civil rights organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of Americans of Arab descent, urged the appeals court to affirm Thompson's ruling.

"To turn a courthouse into a place in which the government endorses one religious viewpoint, as the chief justice did in this case, is to cut off all avenues for dissenters to vindicate their counter-majoritarian rights," the brief stated.

The First Amendment's Establishment Clause prohibits the state's endorsement of one religious belief over another, "and when the endorsement occurs in a judicial building, a place devoted to the fair and equal administration of the law, the message is even more dangerous," the brief stated.

[From an April 15 Americans United press release and an April 30 article by Stan Bailey in the *Birmingham News*.]

Minutes for April AFS Board Meeting

In attendance: Judy Thompson, Kelly Wilhoit, Kate Miller, Steve Yothment, Harriet Harris, Bill Burton, Lew Southern

Minutes taken by: Harriet Harris

Time/Date of meeting: 2:00 PM, April 20, 2003

- ▶ The minutes of the March Board Meeting were approved as they appeared in the April newsletter.
- ▶ Judy said that she will ask Ray Knisley to register the name "Atlanta Freethought Center" with the State of GA.
- ▶ Steve reported that the outdoor A/C unit of our tenant, Dr. Tu, had to be replaced at a cost of \$1200.

- ▶ Bill reported that our bank balance is \$714 after paying current expenses, including the A/C unit.
- ▶ The Board approved the extension of Dr. Tu's lease to December 2004 at the current rent. Steve will generate a new lease and present it to Dr. Tu.
- ▶ Judy appointed Joel Kollin and Tony King to analyze our budget and suggest ways to improve our balance. Steve volunteered to help Joel and Tony in the effort.
- ▶ Lew Southern, fund-raising chair, reported his plans to follow up on his recent mailing.

The Pryor Nomination

PRYOR NOMINATED TO COURT BENCH

U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions announced on April 9 that Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor has been nominated to serve on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta.

"I am honored that President Bush has nominated me to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. I look forward to the confirmation process of the U.S. Senate," Pryor said in a statement.

Sessions said the White House first contacted him about nominating Pryor late last year to feel out the attorney general's interest in the position.

"I believe he's a perfect fit," Sessions said. "Bill Pryor is one of the most exceptional lawyers I've ever met. He has an incredible commitment to the rule of law. He does what he believes is legally correct, regardless of political pressure."

The confirmation process is expected to take several months, Sessions said. Pryor would continue to serve as attorney general until he is confirmed for the judgeship, if that occurs, Sessions said. Gov. Bob Riley would select Pryor's replacement.

If confirmed, Pryor would replace Judge Emmett Ripley Cox, also a Mobile Republican, who announced in 2000 that he was retiring from active duty. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals handles cases from Alabama, Florida and Georgia.

UNFIT TO JUDGE

Sen. Sessions' positive statements about Bill Pryor are very contrary to numerous articles in Alabama and Georgia newspapers about the nomination. Jeff McMurray of the Associated Press reported on May 2 about a Supreme Court brief that Pryor filed on February 18, in which he compared homosexual acts to "prostitution, adultery, necrophilia, bestiality, possession of child pornography and even incest and pedophilia."

Sen. Charles Schumer, a New York Democrat on the Judiciary Committee that will consider Pryor's nomination, called the brief "another red flag for a nominee who is starting out with a

troubling record."

"It's hard to believe that, in the entire state of Alabama, the administration can't find a conservative to nominate who isn't out of the mainstream and doesn't make incendiary comments," Schumer said.

Pryor, the lead writer on the brief also signed by attorneys general from South Carolina and Utah, wrote that the Texas statute under challenge forbids only homosexual acts, not orientation. He argued the Constitution protects orientation but not homosexual acts, which he contended are "historically recognized as wrong."

"Petitioners' protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, a constitutional right that protects 'the choice of one's partner' and 'whether and how to connect sexually' must logically extend to activities like prostitution, adultery, necrophilia, bestiality, possession of child pornography, and even incest and pedophilia (if the child should credibly claim to be 'willing')," he wrote.

Pryor's nomination already was under scrutiny because of his outspoken opposition to abortion rights. Pryor, a strong Catholic, appears to not be able to separate his personal religious views from his legal opinions.

Alabama, South Carolina and Utah are among the 13 states whose bans on homosexual sodomy could be overturned if the Supreme Court decides it is unconstitutional to punish gay couples for their bedroom activities. The court heard arguments in such a case in March and is expected to rule by July.

Many gay rights groups are questioning whether Pryor should be confirmed.

"If his personal views are going to in any way influence the way he passes judgment on cases before him, I would be really nervous if I was a gay or lesbian person who had an anti-discrimination case where Pryor was the judge," said Cathy Renna, spokeswoman for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

Patrick Guerriero, executive direc-

tor of the Log Cabin Republicans (a GOP gay and lesbian group) said the group would oppose the nomination.

"Clearly the arguments put forth in his amicus brief reflect a true misunderstanding of a large segment of the American family in gay and lesbian relationships," Guerriero said.

An editorial in the Washington Post on April 11 called Pryor "a parody of what Democrats imagine Mr. Bush to be plotting for the federal court... Mr. Pryor is probably best known as a zealous advocate of relaxing the wall between church and state. He teamed up with one of Pat Robertson's organizations in a court effort to defend student-led prayer in public schools, and he has vocally defended Alabama's chief justice, who has insisted on displaying the Ten Commandments in state court facilities. But his career is broader. He has urged the repeal of a key section of the Voting Rights Act, which he regards as "an affront to federalism and an expensive burden." He has also called *Roe v. Wade* 'the worst abomination of constitutional law in our history.'"

The Washington Post editorial continued, "Mr. Pryor's speeches display a disturbingly politicized view of the role of courts. He has suggested that impeachment is an appropriate remedy for judges who 'repeatedly and recklessly... overturn popular will and ... rewrite constitutional law.' And he talks publicly about judging in the vulgarly political terms of the current judicial culture war. He concluded one speech, for example, with the following prayer: 'Please, God, no more Souters' — a reference to the betrayal many conservatives feel at the honorable career of Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter."

Even the Atlanta Journal-Constitution balked at the nomination in an editorial on May 6, titled "Religious Hard-liner Unfit To Judge." The editors wrote, "Alabama Attorney Gen. Bill Pryor favors posting the Ten Commandments in the courtroom, opposes abortion, even for rape victims, and filed the only state brief in

The Pryor Nomination *(continued)*

opposition to the federal Violence Against Women Act. President Bush wants him on the appellate court that oversees the rights of Georgians."

The editorial continued, "If Bush had combed the country for the perfect Christian Right extremist, he couldn't have found a more perfect candidate... A popular speaker at Christian Coalition events, Pryor is best remembered for standing on the steps of the Alabama Capitol at a rally in support of state Supreme Court

Justice Roy Moore's display of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom."

"Pryor used the occasion to rail against the Roe v. Wade decision. 'I will never forget,' he said, 'the day seven members of our highest court ripped the Constitution and ripped out the life of millions of unborn children.'"

The editorial concluded, "Pryor may be a good lawyer and a faithful Republican, but his lifelong extremism disqualifies him for a federal judgeship."

IT'S TIME TO DEMONSTRATE!

In an email to the AFS Forum email list on May 2, Larry Darby announced that Alabama Atheists will demonstrate against Pryor's nomination on June 4 at the State Court Building in Montgomery. Larry said, "Plan now to join with Alabama Atheists to stop this threat to liberty, justice and the American way of life!"

[Part of this article is from an April 9 *Montgomery Advertiser* article by Todd Kleffman.]

AHA Releases Humanist Manifesto III

(from a press release by the American Humanist Association)

On April 21, 2003, the American Humanist Association proudly released *Humanism and Its Aspirations*, a successor document to the movement-initiating *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933, and to *Humanist Manifesto II* which made headline news worldwide in 1973.

In signing this landmark document, 19 Nobel laureates join celebrities such as Oliver Stone, the "Amazing" Randi, and Kurt Vonnegut, as well as influential thinkers including Janet Jeppson Asimov, Bill Baird, Richard Dawkins, Vashti McCollum, Katha Pollitt, and Edward O. Wilson.

"This document marks a distinct evolution of thought. It succinctly details a positive and personal Humanism, one that will more clearly reso-

nate with the general public," said Tony Hileman, executive director of the American Humanist Association.

Fred Edwards, chair of the Drafting Committee, the voice of Humanism on many radio and television programs, and editor of the Humanist magazine added, "This new manifesto gives more emphasis to compassion as the motivating force behind the Humanist commitment to reason. It therefore expresses the fullness of what it means to be human."

The document treats the subjects of how we understand the world, how the world works, the source and nature of ethics, finding meaning in life, and working toward social justice.

With this release the American

Humanist Association is calling on all likeminded individuals dedicated to a better future to add their signatures. As the document declares, "We aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone."

The public is invited to see and sign Humanist Manifesto II at:

www.AmericanHumanist.org

The American Humanist Association is the oldest and largest Humanist organization in the nation. The AHA is dedicated to ensuring a voice for those with a positive outlook, based on reason and experience, which embraces all of humanity.

Alabama Atheists Protest Judge Moore's Monument

Opposing groups rallied in front of the Alabama Judicial Building on May 1, supporting and opposing Judge Roy Moore's monument to the Ten Commandments in the building's rotunda.

About 100 supporters of Moore and his monument cheered and applauded several speakers. About a dozen members of Alabama Atheists carried banners and spoke briefly.

"We're here today to defend a man who stuck his neck out for the Ten Commandments," said Ted Sobay of Ozark, organizer of the rally in sup-

port of Moore.

Larry Darby, state director of the atheist group, said "We're here for several reasons today. Probably most importantly is to demonstrate support for U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson and his order to Chief Justice Moore to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the state Judicial Building, which is taxpayer property," Darby said.

Earlier at the opposing rally, Darby said American Atheists are opposed to government endorsement of reli-

gion in all areas, including the National Day of Prayer proclaimed in 1988 by former President Ronald Reagan for May 1 of each year. Darby read Bible verses quoting Jesus telling his disciples to pray in secret instead of on the streets.

"We can only wish that Chief Justice Moore and Gov. Bob Riley and various members of the Alabama Legislature would obey their own Bible," Darby said.

[From a May 2 article in the *Birmingham News*.]

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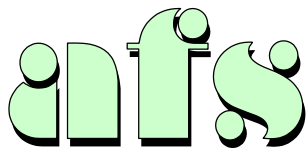
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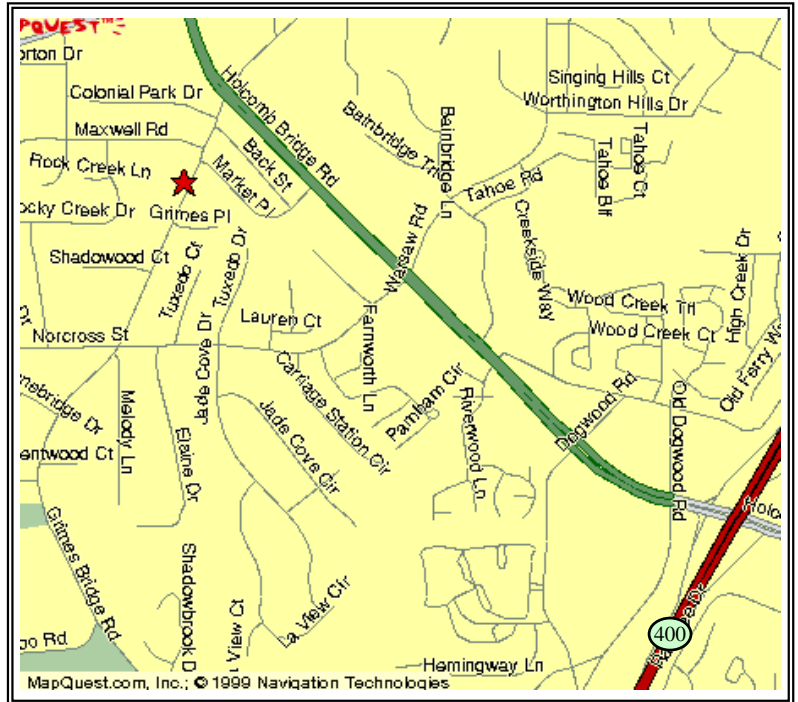
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The May Meeting:
Sunday, May 11
1:00 PM at the AFS Center
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,
Roswell, GA

This Month's Speaker:
Donna Gore



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