

# Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 9 Number 8 • August 2003

## Our August Meeting

Our August 10 meeting will be at 1:00 at the **Atlanta Freethought Center**, Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA. The meeting will include a group discussion.

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, August 9, 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 on Friday, August 15, at the **Park Tavern Brewery and Eatery**, 500 10<sup>th</sup> Street NE in Atlanta. Let's meet there at 7:00 PM. The Park Tavern has an amazing selection of food and beverages, including hand-crafted beers brewed on the premises by their brewmaster, John Stuart. See their website at [www.parktavern.com](http://www.parktavern.com).

To get there, take I-85 to the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Exit. Go east to 500 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The Park Tavern will be on the left.

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, August 17, 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 AF 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).

## AFS Meetings and Activities

Aug 9: AFS Hike at Chattahoochee River, 11:00 AM.  
Aug 10: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM.  
Aug 15: AFS Social, Park Tavern in Atlanta, 7:00 PM.  
Aug 17: AFS Board Meeting at AF Center, 2:00 PM.  
Aug 17: AFS Discussion Group, AF Center, 4:00 PM.

## Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center at 12:30 on Sunday, August 24.

## Robertson's Prayer Offensive

TV preacher Pat Robertson, in an apparent effort to promote a Supreme Court that approves his religious-political agenda, is urging his nationwide audience to pray for a change in the make-up of the high court.

Incensed by the *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling, which stated that gays "are entitled to respect for their private lives," Robertson is seeking divine help in restructuring the nation's top court. To achieve that goal, the religious broadcaster is sponsoring a 21-day "prayer offensive."

On July 8, Robertson e-mailed an "Urgent call for prayer" letter to Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) viewers, exhorting them to pray for the retirement of several of the high court's justices. He noted that one "justice is 83 years old, another has cancer, and another has a heart condition."

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, expressed anger at Robertson's plea.

"There is something ghoulish about praying for the removal of some the Supreme Court's justices while noting their age and health problems," Lynn said. "This shows how desperate Robertson and his Religious Right allies are to remake the high court."

"Robertson and his friends want a Supreme Court that enforces the Religious Right's version of biblical law," continued Lynn. "They despise court rulings that uphold individual liberty and freedom of conscience."

According to Robertson's letter, the Supreme Court has done great damage to America with decisions that "ruled prayer out of the public schools" and found a right of privacy that opened "the door to the slaughter of more than 43,000,000 innocent unborn children."

But with the *Lawrence* ruling, the high court had gone too far, Robertson proclaimed. Parroting Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.), Robertson informed his CBN viewers that the ruling in *Lawrence* declared a "constitutional right to consensual sodomy and, by the language in its decision, has opened the door to homosexual marriage, bigamy, legalized prostitution, and even incest."

[From a July 15 press release by Americans United.]



## 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 10: This meeting will include a group discussion of current events.

Sept 14: Leola Reis, Vice President of Planned Parenthood of Georgia, will speak on women's rights and the challenges of her organization.

Oct 12: Ted Goodwin, Georgia Representative for the Hemlock Society, will speak on end-of-life choices and the dying-with-dignity movement.

Nov 9: Ed and Diane Buckner will be back in Atlanta. Ed may speak (tentative) on the Council for Secular Humanism.

To join the AFS Forum e-mail list, send a blank message to [AFSforum-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:AFSforum-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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# “Bright” – A New Noun

**P**aul Geisert and Mynga Futrell, a couple of atheists in Sacramento, CA, have invented a new noun. It is *Bright*. What is a Bright? A Bright is a person who has a naturalistic worldview. According to their website at [www.the-brights.com](http://www.the-brights.com), a Bright's worldview is free of supernatural and mystical elements. In addition, a Bright's ethics and actions are based on a naturalistic worldview.

The website claims that “the naturalistic worldview is insufficiently expressed within most cultures... The simple noun *Bright* gathers under the same umbrella a great diversity of persons who have a naturalistic worldview. Under this broad umbrella these people, *as Brights*, can gain social and political power in a society infused with supernaturalism.”

The website encourages readers to consider if they are Brights. If so, the reader is encouraged to “join the effort to change the thinking of society”, which is the goal of the *Brights Movement*.

All well and good. But, is anyone listening to their idea? Is it catching on? The answer is YES! Richard Dawkins, a professor of the public understanding of science at Oxford University, wrote a prominent article in the June 21 issue of *The Guardian*, titled “The Future Looks Bright”. In the article, Dawkins welcomes the attempt to raise consciousness about atheism by co-opting a word with cheerful associations. He writes, “Geisert and Futrell are very insistent that their word is a noun and must not be an adjective. ‘I am bright’ sounds arrogant. ‘I am a bright’ sounds too unfamiliar to be arrogant: it is puzzling, enigmatic, tantalising. It invites the question, ‘What on earth is a bright?’ And then you’re away: ‘A bright is a person whose world view is free of supernatural and mystical elements. The ethics and actions of a bright are based on a naturalistic world view.’”

Dawkins continues, “Some brights are happy to call themselves atheists. Some call themselves humanists,

some free thinkers. But all brights have a world view that is free of supernaturalism and mysticism.”

Then, on July 12, the *New York Times* printed an article by Daniel Dennett, titled “The Bright Stuff”. (Dennett is a professor of philosophy at Tufts University.) In the article, Dennett notes that a 2002 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life suggests that 27 million Americans are atheist or agnostic or have no religious preference. These 27 million are Brights, he says.

Most Brights don't play the “aggressive atheist” role, says Dennett. “We don't want to turn every conversation into a debate about religion, and we don't want to offend our friends and neighbors, and so we maintain a diplomatic silence.”

Dennett continues, “But the price is political impotence. Politicians don't think they even have to pay us lip service, and leaders who wouldn't be caught dead making religious or ethnic slurs don't hesitate to disparage the ‘godless’ among us.”

“From the White House down, bright-gashing is seen as a low-risk vote-getter. And, of course, the assault isn't only rhetorical: the Bush administration has advocated changes in government rules and policies to increase the role of religious organizations in daily life, a serious subversion of the Constitution. It is time to halt this erosion and to take a stand: the United States is not a religious state, it is a secular state that tolerates all religions and – yes – all manner of nonreligious ethical beliefs as well.”

Later in the article, Dennett writes, “There's no reason all Americans can't support bright rights. I am neither gay nor African-American, but nobody can use a slur against blacks or homosexuals in my hearing and get away with it. Whatever your theology, you can firmly object when you hear family or friends sneer at atheists or agnostics and other godless folk.”

Dennett wants political candidates to recognize brights as a significant

segment of society. He writes, “Let's get America's candidates thinking about how to respond to a swelling chorus of brights. With any luck, we'll soon hear some squirming politician trying to get off the hot seat with the feeble comment that ‘some of my best friends are brights.’”

The articles on Brights kept coming. The *St. Petersburg Times* published an article on July 20 by staff writer Sharon Tubbs, titled “A Brights Idea”.

In the article, Tubbs gives more background on the Brights idea. It all started a few months before the Godless Americans March on Washington back in March. The name that organizers gave the march made Geisert cringe. “I went just about ballistic,” he said. “I was just steaming under the idea of being called *godless*.” He didn't want to be described as a negation of God, he said.

So, he started thinking about a new name for people like him. One day he was brainstorming names at the kitchen table, and *Bright* came to mind.

It is a positive word. It fits, at least tangentially, with the word ‘enlightenment,’ the name given to the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophical movement that focused on scientific reason rather than dogma.

He ran to the other room to tell his wife Futrell. “I've got the word, and this is going to be big!”

The couple decided to unveil their thought at the Atheist Alliance International convention, which was in Tampa in April. They had been board members of AAI for several years.

The idea was well received. For example, Jim Peterson, president of Humanists of the Suncoast in Largo, FL, said, “I thought it was another way to reach the public. We hope that promulgating a new name, a different name, will bring philosophical positions related to naturalism together.”

On July 23, the *Sacramento Bee* published an article by staff writer Jennifer Garza, titled “In A New Light.” The article quoted Paul Kurtz, chairman of the Council on Secular Human-



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## Brights (*continued*)

ism, saying, "It's intriguing. If the term sheds light on the large minority of unbelievers, then I think it's a good thing."

But not everyone agrees with the idea. "It's a cop-out," says Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists, which organized the Godless Americans March. "It seems like a way to hide who you are to please other people. I'm not ashamed of my beliefs. ...Plus, it's a silly name."

The Institute for Humanist Studies also did not like the idea. In their July 30 newsletter *Humanist Network News*, the article "All Things Bright Not Beautiful," by Annalee Newitz claims that the Bright Movement is nothing more than "naturalist crap."

"The founders of this movement in the making think that *atheist* just doesn't sound happy and fun enough," says Ms. Newitz. "Maybe, they wager, more people will like atheists if we don't go around describing ourselves as godless. Instead, we should call ourselves something that makes people think of pretty stars and emergency vehicles."

Ms. Newitz also attacked Dawkins' article, saying that homosexuals did not "hijack" the word *gay* as Mr. Dawkins claimed. "They were called *gay* as an insult by other people...They fought tooth and nail to be respected, and they got beaten up by cops and fired from their jobs and sent to jail. Finally they were so mis-

erable that they just started calling themselves gay to take the insulting sting out of the word... It wasn't a marketing campaign. It was survivor's pride."

"If we're going to stand up and fight for our right to be atheists, let's not try to jump-start some dumb little advertising campaign that makes us sound like cultists or kids who went to hippie day school. Let's start where it hurts, the way our brothers and sisters did: with words like godless, unholy, damned, infidel, and unbeliever. Civil liberties for the infidel! We represent the godless future! Now get used to it."

[From [www.the-brights.com](http://www.the-brights.com) and [www.humaniststudies.org](http://www.humaniststudies.org).]

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## Minutes for July AFS Board Meeting

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

Minutes taken by: Harriet Harris

Time/Date of meeting: 2:00 PM, May 18, 2003

- ▶ The minutes of the May Board Meeting were approved as they appeared in the June newsletter.
- ▶ Treasurer Bill Burton presented a Financial Report. Our current balance is \$288. Finances were discussed. Joel and Steve agreed to look into securing a better mortgage on the property.
- ▶ Steve reported on his continuing maintenance plans,

specifically, painting, carpet cleaning and ceiling tile replacement. The board discussed adding a rear door to Suite 500. Lew offered to get pricing on the door, and to help find reasonably priced contractors.

- ▶ The board discussed names and sources of possible future speakers. The board agreed to "keep eyes and ears open" for possible speakers, and to contact Steve with suggestions.
  - ▶ A card has been sent on behalf of AFS to the family of Mike Myjak, who died in May.
  - ▶ The next Board Meeting will be on August 17.
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## Regional Atheists Meet – Birmingham, AL – Saturday, 9 August 2003

Where: Embassy Suites Hotel, 2300 Woodcrest Place, Birmingham, AL

When: August 9, 2003, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Speakers: **Ellen Johnson**, President of American Atheists

**Larry Darby**, attorney and activist, American Atheists Atheist of the Year

**Pamela Sumners**, a constitutional lawyer, involved in several Church/State cases

**Dr. Delos B. McKown**, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Auburn University

**Conrad Goeringer**, Director for Public Policy for American Atheists, Editor of AANews

Registration: \$25 for AA members, \$30 for non-members

For more information, see [www.atheists.org/ram/](http://www.atheists.org/ram/) or email Larry Darby at [ldarby@atheists.org](mailto:ldarby@atheists.org).

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"The foundation of all morality is to have done, once and for all, with lying; to give up pretending to believe that for which there is no evidence, and repeating unintelligible propositions about things beyond the possibilities of knowledge."

– Thomas Henry Huxley

"Atheism, properly understood, is no mere disbelief; is in no wise a cold, barren negative; it is, on the contrary, a hearty, fruitful affirmation of all truth, and involves the positive assertion of action of highest humanity."

– Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891), from "A Plea For Atheism"

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# Judge Moore Appeals to Supreme Court

## Action Will Speed Resolution of Dispute, Says Americans United's Lynn

Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore announced on July 22 that he would ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that the display of the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building is unconstitutional.

A three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit ruled in early July that the display violated the separation of church and state and would have to be removed. Instead of asking the entire 11th Circuit to review and reverse the three-judge panel's ruling, Moore has opted for a direct appeal of the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said he was pleased with Moore's decision.

"We are happy that Moore has decided to make his appeal directly to the Supreme Court because it will resolve this controversy much sooner," Lynn said. "We are confident that the Supreme Court will quickly find Moore's arguments to be outlandish and totally out of line with years of church-state precedent."

"Courthouses and other public buildings should welcome Americans of all faiths and none," continued Lynn. "When Judge Moore put up his Ten Commandments display, he sent a clear message that some religious perspectives are preferred by the government. That's unconstitutional and

indifferent to the diversity of America."

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling becomes official on July 29. Judge Thompson, who initially ordered the monument removed but allowed it to remain while Moore appealed, has indicated he will lift his stay after Moore's appeal to the 11th Circuit ran its course.

Attorney Ayesha Khan of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, one of three organizations that sued Moore over the monument, said in a July 25 press conference, "Our position is going to be the stay should be lifted. There's no reason for it to remain. "I think we will be pressing Judge Thompson on it next week if he doesn't act on his own."

### US BILL TO PREVENT REMOVAL

In a related story, The U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill amendment designed to prevent U.S. marshals from removing Judge Moore's Ten Commandments monument if ordered to do so by a federal judge.

In a 260-161 vote cast on July 23, the House approved the amendment that Rep. John Hostettler, R-Indiana, tacked on to the Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary spending bill.

"None of the funds appropriated in this act may be used to enforce the judgment of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in (the Ten Commandments case)," Hostettler's amend-

ment states.

The vote may have been largely symbolic and does not carry the weight of law. Even if the amendment gets through the Senate and is signed into law, the process isn't likely to be completed before late September. U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson could order the monument removed as soon as August 1.

Six of the seven House members from Alabama supported the measure, with Artur Davis, D-Birmingham, the lone dissenter.

"I felt, frankly, that it was outrageous, in that it would prevent the U.S. Marshals Office from carrying out a court order," Davis said Thursday. "In Alabama, unfortunately, we have a history of a governor 40 years ago who stood in the schoolhouse door in defiance of the federal courts. The last thing we should do is sanction not following a court order. It would set us back 40 years."

Rep. Spencer Bachus, R-Birmingham, disagreed.

"A majority of people in Alabama, and the American people as a whole, believe the 11th Circuit Court erred in its decision," Bachus said. "The House of Representatives, as the branch of government closest to the people, has a duty to reflect their will."

Tom Parker, Moore's spokesman, applauded the amendment, which he said came as a surprise to the chief



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## Judge Moore (*continued*)

justice, who installed the two-ton display in the rotunda of the state Judicial Building two years ago.

"This action by Congress is a recognition that liberal federal judges are wrong when they try to say that long-standing historical practices, like the public acknowledgment of God, are unconstitutional," Parker said in a statement.

Rhonda Brownstein, legal director of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, another plaintiff in the case, said Hostettler's action was little more than a ploy to win applause from religious conservatives.

"If this legislation passes, I doubt it would stand up in court," Brownstein said. "It sounds to me like nothing more than political grandstanding by a right-wing politician."

The House also passed an amendment by Hostettler that would prohibit federal money from being spent

to enforce a federal court order out of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals that ruled that public schools cannot lead children in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

### CHRISTIANS PLAN CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Christian groups are planning acts of peaceful civil disobedience against expected federal orders to remove the monument.

John Giles, president of the Christian Coalition of Alabama, said in a July 26 press conference that any order to remove the monument is a "red alert" for Christians. He said the Christian Defense Coalition of Washington and National Clergy Council of Fredericksburg, VA, will lead efforts to recruit Christians to kneel in prayer around the monument in the judicial building rotunda if orders to remove it are given.

"I think you can anticipate people of faith swarming into Montgomery

from all corners of the country to peacefully preserve the installation of that monument," Giles said. "This is our red alert. We're getting down to the fourth quarter with three minutes left in the game."

Giles said those who peacefully demonstrate against the monument's removal are prepared to be arrested if necessary. "No one is going to provoke arrest," he said.

The Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which also represented plaintiffs in the suit to remove the monument, called the use of civil disobedience in this case "bogus."

"Civil disobedience in the cause of violating the rights of religious minorities is disgraceful," Lynn said.

[From a July 22 Americans United press release, a July 25 *Montgomery Advertiser* article by Todd Kleffman, and a July 26 AP article by Stan Bailey.]

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## Another Ten Commandments Case: Barrow County, GA

**B**arrow County Attorney Currie Mingledorff II said on July 22 he expects to end up in court with the American Civil Liberties Union over the county's refusal to remove a Ten Commandments display from the Barrow County Courthouse. (Barrow County is about 40 miles NE of Atlanta. The county seat is Winder, GA.)

"We believe they are preparing to file a lawsuit against us," Mingledorff said after Barrow County commissioners met in closed session to discuss "threatened litigation" by the ACLU.

The commission adamantly refused the ACLU's June 16 request to remove the display. A citizen hung the commandments on a wall near the main entrance to the historic courthouse about a year ago, Commission Chairman Eddie Elder said last month. He declined to identify the citizen.

After the request, Mingledorff wrote to the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a public policy group that fights for Judeo-Christian

causes, such as anti-abortion and pro-marriage legislation, to seek legal assistance.

"I think the commission has stated loudly and clearly that they will take it to court," Mingledorff said. "The ACLJ has agreed to assist us to whatever extent necessary. They are our partners, should litigation ensue."

Gerry Weber, a spokesman for the ACLU, said earlier Tuesday that the organization is waiting to see if Barrow County commissioners change their minds.

"We're giving them a little bit of time to see if that's their final decision," Weber said.

Mingledorff said he told ACLU attorney Maggie Garrett he would call her today about the closed session Tuesday night.

In a June 16 letter to the Barrow County Commission, Garrett asked the county to remove the Ten Commandments, citing court precedents that prohibited the religion-tinged list

from display in public buildings but not directly threatening a lawsuit.

"The law is well-established that government displays of the Ten Commandments violates the Constitution," she said in the letter.

The ACLU asked for a response by July 7.

On June 30, the commission held a public hearing in which 200 citizens voiced their support for the Ten Commandments display. Commissioners voted unanimously to leave the display up.

Mingledorff notified the ACLU July 9 that the county intended to leave the Ten Commandments plaque in the courthouse, saying it is the commission's view that the display has legal and historical significance.

"The Ten Commandments have an independent secular meaning in our society as a foundational legal document and as a significant basis of American law," he said in the letter.

(*continued on page 8*)

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# Pryor Nomination Struck Down

**D**emocrats derailed the nomination of Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor on July 31 to a federal appeals court, making his prospects for getting Senate approval dim if similar earlier cases are any indication.

After an hour of acrimonious speeches, the Senate voted 53-44 to end debate on Pryor's candidacy for a lifetime seat on the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. But under Senate rules, 60 votes are necessary to end debate and move the nomination to an up or down vote. All Democrats, except Sens. Ben Nelson of Nebraska and Zell Miller of Georgia, voted against ending debate.

It was a bitter defeat for President Bush. Critics accuse Bush of trying to "pack" the federal court system with ideologically sympathetic judges who would tend to vote against abortion rights, civil liberties legislation and state-church separation. On July 30, Republicans also lost a seventh filibuster vote over the battle to confirm District of Columbia attorney Miguel Estrada to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. Opponents say that Estrada has evaded answering questions regarding his position on major cases during his confirmation process. They also lost in their third attempt on July 29 to name Texas judge Priscilla Owen to a seat on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court.

Pryor's backers continued to argue that the attorney general's opponents held his Roman Catholic beliefs against him.

"And what are his 'deeply held beliefs?' He's a traditional, pro-life Catholic," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah.

"If Pryor can't get confirmed, then

about 90 percent of the people that I grew up with can't be a federal judge," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. "Because 90 percent of the people that I grew up with have strongly held beliefs about life and death."

Another fierce defender of Pryor, Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., said Democrats were using a "religious test" against the candidate.

An angry Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., called accusations of anti-Catholicism, "religious McCarthyism," and said Democrats were not aware Pryor was Catholic until Hatch explicitly asked the nominee about his religion at his confirmation hearing last month.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-So. Dakota, called Mr. Pryor "the single most controversial nomination" to come before the Senate so far, and most Democrats said his statements opposing abortion, as well as cases he has handled on civil and defendants' rights, states' rights and the tobacco lawsuits put him too far outside the mainstream.

"Mr. Pryor is simply too ideological to serve as a federal court judge," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. "Pryor's litigation positions, public statements and his writings leave little doubt that he is committed to using the law not simply to advance a 'conservative' agenda, but a narrow and extreme ideological agenda."

Dozens of interest groups that opposed the nomination hailed Thursday's vote.

"The vote is a reflection not just of Pryor's alarming record, but also that a substantial number of senators recognize that they have a constitutional duty to protect our courts and the American people they serve," said Nan Aron, head of the Alliance for

Justice.

"We applaud senators for taking a stand against Pryor's nomination," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "Bill Pryor has spent his political career trying to undermine church-state separation and showing contempt for religious pluralism. His nomination is a divisive one and must be defeated."

Americans United issued a 11-page report earlier this year on the Alabama Attorney General's extreme views on the First Amendment prohibition against the merger of government and religion.

For example, in a 1997 speech to a private school in Alabama, he said the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States "are rooted in a Christian perspective of the nature of government and the nature of man." "The challenge of the next millennium," said Pryor, "will be to preserve the American experiment by restoring its Christian perspective."

Pryor has also been a strident supporter of Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore. Moore placed a 5,280-pound Ten Commandments monument in the state Judicial Building and has been fighting in the federal courts to keep it there. In a 1997 speech at a pro-Moore rally, Pryor proclaimed that, "God has chosen, through his son Jesus Christ, this time, this place for all Christians - Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox - to save our country and save our courts."

[From an August 1 *Montgomery Advertiser* article by Ana Radelat, a July 31 press release by Americans United, and a July 31 press release by American Atheists.]

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"Atheism is not something we should fear, or dispose of like some old coat while we put on some other term that, we are told, is a placebo for our cultural ills. If others want to use different labels, fine. We respect their right to do so. The use of terms, whether Atheist, Freethinker, Humanist, Rationalist, or any other label is ultimately a matter of choice. American Atheists never presumes to order anyone, including our fellow nonbelievers, to use a particular label. We hope, no, insist, on the same level of respect. Fads, often fueled by the Internet, come and go with frantic speed. Changing labels, we think, is not a magical solution for winning a cultural-political struggle."

- From an editorial by Conrad F. Goeringer in AANEWS #1115, August 3, 2003

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## Another Ten Commandments Case (continued from page 6)

Mingledorff said the commission disagrees with the ACLU's contention that the display is unconstitutional.

"The ACLU, in our opinion, incorrectly states the law," he said. "There are cases that the Ten Commandments can be displayed in a government building under certain circumstances."

ACLJ attorney Frank Manion said Tuesday the courts consider specifics surrounding each government display

of the Ten Commandments. He said they consider the history of the display, who displayed it, under what circumstances it was displayed and why it was displayed.

"The courts have said the government can display it if it's for the right reason and in the right way," he said.

Manion said he has spoken with the county, but the ACLJ has not officially become involved because no lawsuit has been filed.

Jack Brown, a Barrow County resident who attended the commissioner's meeting, said he only wants the ACLU to stay out of the county's business.

"All I want them to do is to leave us alone," Brown said. "The Ten Commandments should be able to hang there if the people of Barrow County want them there."

[From a July 22 *Athens Banner-Herald* article by Patrick Crotty.]

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# Clipped

## Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Larry Darby's letter was in the *Tuscaloosa News* on July 14.

Blair Scott's letter was in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on July 26.

### Willfully ignorant Christians

It seems that many Christians are getting their history lessons from the Priestcraft and revisionist writers, who assist in perpetuating their mythology and promoting the dangerous notion that America is a Christian nation.

Jennifer Joy Hale's letter of July 9 presented a couple of whoppers.

James Madison did not say, "We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

Thomas Jefferson did not say, "The reason that Christianity is the best friend of government is because Christianity is the only religion that changes the heart."

The former is a bogus statement debunked by Madison scholars years ago; even discredited Christian writer David Barton admits that one is a lie.

The latter appears on many Christian nation-oriented Internet sites, but, rather curiously, not one lists a source for the alleged quotation.

I am sick and tired of the lies spread by these willfully ignorant Godites. Christian preachers and Christian revisionist writers cannot be trusted to tell the truth about history, and science, for that matter.

What's really sad is that many politicians, from the governor to the school boards, who are today clamoring for more money for education, willingly use the government schools to promote irrational god-beliefs via daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and teaching of pseudo-science.

Larry Darby  
Alabama State Director, American Atheists, Inc.  
Montgomery

### Commandments not basis of law

While defending Judge Moore's Decalogue monument, Ms. Semmes asks, "Where do the critics think our laws pertaining to murder, robbery, etc., came from?"

I've read the Constitution of the United States many times and I can't find the Decalogue anywhere. I can't find any references about Jesus, the Bible, the Ten Commandments, Virgin Mary, Trinity, or anything else having to do with Christianity.

So I checked the Code of Alabama. I couldn't find the Decalogue there, either. What I did find is section 1-3-1 of the Code of Alabama of 1975, originally adopted in 1907; Section 1-3-1: Common law of England adopted.

"The common law of England, so far as it is not inconsistent with the Constitution, laws and institutions of this state, shall, together with such institutions and laws, be the rule of decisions, and shall continue in force, except as from time to time it may be altered or repealed by the Legislature. (Code 1907, §12; Code 1923, §14; Code 1940, T. 1, §3.)"

Just because two of the commandments happen to coincide with modern laws is no grounds to declare the entire legal system to be Decalogue-based.

Blair Scott  
Mobile

"All my life I have made it a rule never to permit a religious man or woman take for granted that his or her religious beliefs deserved more consideration than non-religious beliefs or anti-religious ones. I never agree with that foolish statement that I ought to respect the views of others when I believe them to be wrong."

— Chapman Cohen, "The Credo of Empowerment"

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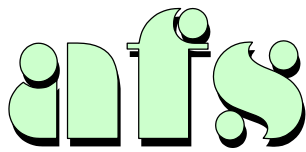
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“Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect.” - James Madison, 1774

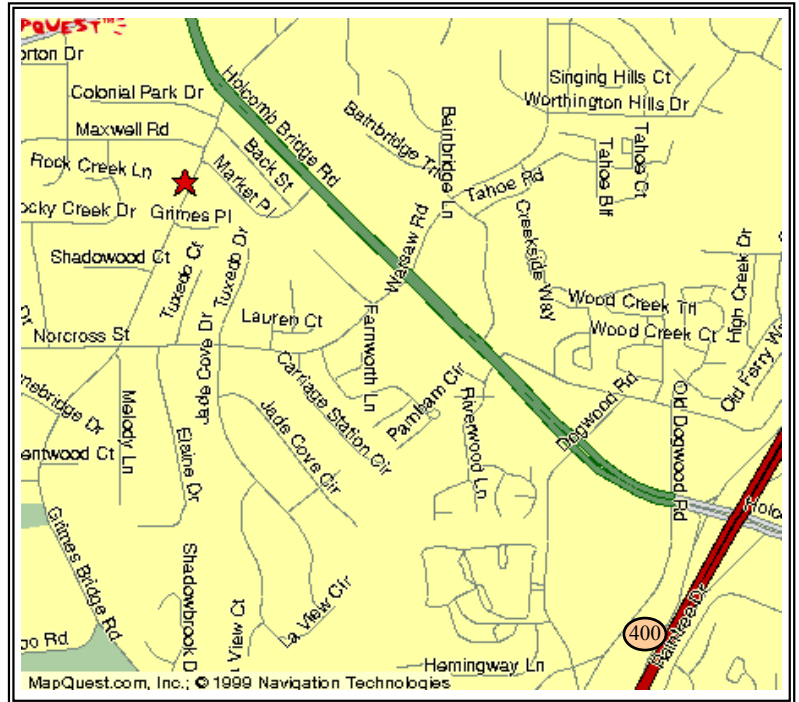
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A Discussion of Our Times**



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