

# Atlanta Freethought News

*Dare to Think for Yourself*

An AFS Publication • Volume 12 Number 3 • March 2006

## The March AFS Meeting

The March 12 AFS meeting will feature John Sugg, senior editor for Creative Loafing magazine, speaking on the anti-evolution movement in Georgia. See his article "A Nation Under God" in the December 2005 Mother Jones at: [www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/12/a\\_nation\\_under\\_god.html](http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/12/a_nation_under_god.html). There is more information on him at [www.JohnSugg.com](http://www.JohnSugg.com).

Mr. Sugg has nearly 30 years of journalism experience. He's worked for The Miami Herald, The Atlanta Constitution, The Palm Beach Post and the Tampa Weekly Planet, which merged with the Creative Loafing group in 2001. He is currently working on a book on the history of the anti-evolution movement in Georgia.

The AFS meeting will be at 1:00 at the **Atlanta Freethought Center**, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA. (Feel free to arrive early for discussion and snacks.) 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.

## AFS Activities

The next **AFS Social** will be at **Athens Pizza House**, 1341 Clairmont Road, on Friday, March 17, at 7:00 PM. (It's on Clairmont Road near North Decatur Road in Atlanta.)

To get there, take I-85 to Exit 91, the Clairmont Road exit. Turn east at the light and go 3.5 miles to Athens Pizza House, which is on the left before you cross N. Decatur Rd.

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center on Sunday, March 19, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM.

The **Tuesday Lunch Bunch** meets every Tuesday at 12:30 at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy in Atlanta.

## SOS Meets at AF Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the Atlanta Freethought Center every Tuesday evening at 8:00PM. SOS is the secular substitute for Alcoholics Anonymous.

## Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center on Sunday, March 26, at 12:30 PM.

## AFS Meetings and Activities

March 12: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM.  
March 17: AFS Social, Athens Pizza House, 7:00 PM.  
March 19: AFS Board Meeting at AF Center, 2:00 PM.  
March 19: AFS Discussion Group at AF Center, 4:00 PM.

## Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** meets on the first Sunday of every month at 12:30 PM at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see [www.fellowshipofreason.com](http://www.fellowshipofreason.com).

## Darwin Day Celebration A Success

Thanks to all AFS members who attended the Darwin Day Celebration at Morehouse College on February 10. It was a resounding success. AFS had several cakes, plates of cookies and other goodies, as well as coffee for the event.

We talked to many interested students about Darwin and evolution, and handed out flyers and newsletters.

Thanks also to Seni Sode and Aaron Downen, Morehouse College students, for getting permission to have the event there, as well as Ried Crowe for organizing the event.

## The AFS Yard Sale

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have a yard sale on Saturday, April 29, at Judy Thompson's house, 3366 Rockbridge Road, in Avondale Estates. Please start to collect goods now! Antiques, collector's items and books are particularly welcome. We will have more information on the yard sale in the April newsletter.

## The AAI Convention: April 14-16

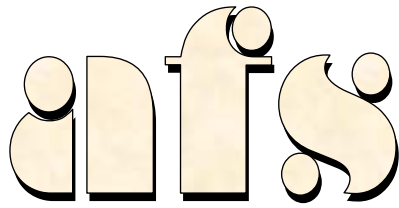
The Atheist Alliance International will have its annual convention in Kansas City on April 14-16. Speakers will include Julia Sweeney, Dr. Paul Mirecki, Lori Lipman Brown, Matt Cherry of the Institute for Humanist Studies, Dr. Fred Whitehead, Dr. Ron Pine, Woody Kaplan, Larry Jones and Dr. Gale Fuller.

See the AAI website at [atheistalliance.org](http://atheistalliance.org) for details.

## The CFI-Florida Conference

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual CFI-Florida Conference will be on March 24-26 in Tampa, FL. Programs for the conference include:

*Science vs. Junk Science* - Jeanett Madea  
*From Apathy to Activism* - Penny Higgins  
*Is an Islamic Reformation Possible?* - Ibn Warraq  
*The Issue of Military Sexual Trauma* - Chicky Demarais  
*A New Tomorrow: Exciting Humanist Prospects* - Paul Kurtz  
*Whose Sex Ed? The Battle for Youth* - Danene Sorace  
*Where Do We Go From Here?* - Paul Kurtz  
*Struggle for Secularism in India* - Meera Nanda  
*Life on Other Worlds* - Jack Robinson  
*Why There Really Is No God* - Eddie Tabash  
See [www.cfiFlorida.org](http://www.cfiFlorida.org) for details.



**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.

Mar 12: **John Sugg**, senior editor for the Creative Loafing group of alternative newswEEKlies, will speak on the anti-evolution movement in Georgia. See his article "A Nation Under God" in the December 2005 *Mother Jones* at [www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/12/a\\_nation\\_under\\_god.html](http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/12/a_nation_under_god.html). See more at [www.JohnSugg.com](http://www.JohnSugg.com).

Apr 9: **Dan Barker**, co-president of the **Freedom From Religion Foundation**, will speak on living without religion.

My 14: **Charles Lantz**, DC, will discuss scientific testing of chiropractic techniques.

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

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to xxxx-

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 living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

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 lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an 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**  
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Steve Yothment

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# Senate Passes 3 Bills Sought by Georgia Right to Life

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported on March 3 that anti-abortion groups scored a victory when the state Senate approved three bills supported by Georgia Right to Life.

One measure requires a woman to undergo an ultrasound before having an abortion; another protects pharmacists from disciplinary action if they refuse to fill prescriptions for drugs that terminate a pregnancy. The third would allow prosecutors to charge someone who kills a pregnant woman with two crimes.

That measure, called "The Unborn Victims of Violence Act," sparked the most debate. The bill would allow for the prosecution of anyone who causes the death of a fetus, regardless of the stage of pregnancy.

Georgia's current law defines feticide as the killing of a fetus that has reached "quickening," usually around the 20th week of pregnancy.

"This bill simply realizes that there are two victims," said Caryl Swift, president of Georgia Right to Life. "It's a common sense bill."

Swift said the bill expands on a federal measure signed into law by President Bush in 2004 as a result of the high-profile murder of Laci Peterson and her unborn son, Conner, in California.

Critics, however, fear the bill may be an attempt to assign legal rights to a fetus.

Several Democrats tried to amend it to remove the provision that defines an "unborn child" and add harsher penalties for those who commit crimes against pregnant women.

Republican leaders generally supported the tougher penalties, but they would not remove the definition of an unborn child.

The measure finally passed by a vote of 37-15 with an amendment that increases the penalties for people who commit simple assault against a pregnant woman.

Leola Reis, spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood of Georgia, said lawmakers ought to be passing legislation that protects women.

"It's outrageous that legislators are not demonstrating that they have Georgia women's best interest at heart," Reis said. "Where are the initiatives to prevent unintended pregnancy? Where is the support for better access to prenatal care and children's health care instead of proposals to interfere with a doctor-patient relationship? Where is the trust that women can make these decisions with their families and doctors and without ideological interference from lawmakers?"

The Senate also approved Senate Bill 429, a measure sponsored by Sen. Nancy Schaefer (R-Turnerville) that would require abortion providers to perform a sonogram or ultrasound on women seeking abortion, then give them a choice about whether to view the images. The bill makes an exception for women whose pregnancy was the result of rape or incest.

Schaefer said that a sonogram is often called a "window to the womb" and that "most women cannot believe when viewing a sonogram image that their child is so developed."

"This sonogram bill will save lives," Schaefer said. The measure passed by a vote of 35-17.

The Senate also cleared Senate Bill 123 by Sen. Jim Whitehead Sr. (R-

Evans) that would protect from disciplinary action pharmacists who refuse to dispense medication that terminates a pregnancy. The measure passed by a vote of 35-15.

Planned Parenthood said the bill would not affect emergency contraception such as Plan B.

The three bills now go to the House for consideration.

Georgia's is one of several legislatures considering abortion restrictions this year. The South Dakota legislature recently passed the nation's most far-reaching ban on abortion. That measure would make it a felony for doctors to perform any abortion except to save the life of a pregnant woman. A lawsuit is expected challenging the law's constitutionality under the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision.

In Georgia, anti-abortion forces are trying to build on their momentum from last year, when they successfully championed a bill requiring women seeking an abortion to wait 24 hours after receiving state-mandated information on the risks and alternatives before having the procedure. The measure became law in July.

[From a March 3 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article by Sonji Jacobs.]

## Georgia Legislature Recap, as of March 5, 2006

**House Bill 941** - Authorizes local governments to pay tribute to the nation's religious heritage with a display of the Ten Commandments, the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence.

Status: Passed the House, pending in the Senate.

**Senate Bill 149** - Requires schools to get parent permission before students join certain clubs, including gay support groups.

Status: Passed Senate as an amendment to Senate Bill 413, which requires parent permission to drop out of high school.

**Senate Bill 79** - Requires state Board of Education to create academic electives on the Old and New Testaments.

Status: Passed Senate. Pending in House Education Committee.

**Senate Bill 429** - Requires abortion providers in Georgia to have an ultrasound or sonogram done on a woman seeking the procedure and to offer her an opportunity to view the image.

Status: Passed the Senate. Pending in House.

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# South Dakota Passes Abortion Ban

**S**outh Dakota became the first U.S. state to pass a law banning abortion in virtually all cases, with the intention of forcing the Supreme Court to reconsider its 1973 decision legalizing the procedure.

The law, which would punish doctors who perform the operation with a five-year prison term and a \$5,000 fine, awaits the signature of Republican Gov. Michael Rounds. (This just in: Gov. Rounds signed it into law on Tuesday, March 7.)

"My understanding is we are the first state to truly defy *Roe v. Wade*," the 1973 high court ruling that granted a constitutional right to abortion, said Kate Looby of Planned Parenthood's South Dakota chapter.

State legislatures in Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky also have introduced similar measures this year, but South Dakota's legislation calendar means its law is likely to be enacted first.

"We hope (Rounds) recognizes this for what it is: a political tool and not about the health and safety of the women of South Dakota," Looby said.

"If he chooses to sign it, we will be filing a lawsuit in short order to block it," she said after attending the afternoon debate at the state capital in Pierre. Proponents have said the law was designed for just such a court challenge.

The timing is right, supporters say, given the recent appointments of Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito to the high court. The two conservatives could pave the way to a decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

The high court said on February 21 it will rule on whether the federal government can ban some abortion procedures, a case that could reveal whether the court reshaped by President George W. Bush will restrict abortion rights.

In 1992, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the right to abortion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the last direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*.

The South Dakota law concludes that life begins at conception based on medical advances over the past three decades.

Proposed amendments to the law

to create exceptions to specifically protect the health of the mother, or in cases of rape or incest, were voted down. Also defeated was an amendment to put the proposal in the hands of voters.

The bill does make an exception if the fetus dies during a doctor's attempt to save the mother's life.

Planned Parenthood operates the sole clinic in South Dakota where roughly 800 abortions are performed each year by doctors from neighboring Minnesota, Looby said.

Two years ago, Rounds vetoed a similar bill, saying it would wipe out existing restrictions on abortion while it was fought in the courts. A rewritten bill lost narrowly in the state Senate.

Some legislators opposed to abortion rights questioned whether it was premature to challenge *Roe v. Wade*, and said litigation would prove expensive for the sparsely populated state. An anonymous donor has offered \$1 million to the state to defray the costs of litigation.

[From a February 23 *Reuters* article.]

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## Missouri Bill Proposes Christianity to be Official Religion

**M**issouri legislators in Jefferson City considered a bill that would name Christianity the state's official "majority" religion.

House Concurrent Resolution 13 has it pending in the state legislature.

Karen Aroesty of the Anti-defamation league, along with other watchdogs, began a letter writing and email campaign to stop the resolution.

The resolution would recognize "a

Christian god," and it would not protect minority religions, but "protect the majority's right to express their religious beliefs."

The resolution also recognizes that, "a greater power exists," and only Christianity receives what the resolution calls, "justified recognition."

State representative David Sater of Cassville in southwestern Missouri, sponsored the resolution, but he has

refused to talk about it on camera or over the phone.

Governor Matt Blunt's office would not respond regarding where he stands on the resolution.

(Editor's Note: The Atheist Alliance annual convention is scheduled to be in Kansas City on April 14-16.)

[From a March 3 article by John Mills, News 4 TV, on [www.WMOV.com](http://www.WMOV.com).]

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## Alabama House Votes Down Bible Bill

**T**he Alabama House on February 7 turned down a bill that would have allowed public high schools to offer a course teaching the literary and historical significance of the Bible using a proposed textbook "The Bible and Its Influence." The book was de-

veloped by the Bible Literacy Project.

But opponents said naming a textbook would bypass the textbook selection process established by the Alabama Board of Education and by local school boards.

After the vote, some Democrats ac-

cused Republicans of voting against the bill for political reasons.

"They didn't think of it first. They didn't want the Democrats to get credit for it," said Rep. Alvin Holmes, D-Montgomery.

[From a February 7 AP story.]

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# Life Doesn't Need Faith To Give It Meaning

Perhaps the most powerful atheist "myth" is the world of "Star Trek," where humans have given up wars, social prejudices and divisive beliefs and used science to end hunger and poverty.

By Marie Alena Castle, communications director of Atheists For Human Rights

**I**n our religious culture, atheists are not so much on the outside looking in as caught in the cross-fire. We'd just as soon be left alone, but the demand from all sides is that we have a god belief. Because we don't, the Bible calls us fools, it is assumed we have no moral compass, and we cannot get elected to public office. As for patriotism, "An atheistic American is a contradiction in terms," according to Congressman Louis Rabaut, who introduced the bill putting "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954.

The elder George Bush reiterated this in 1987 at a news conference: "I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens," he said, "nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God." All this simply because we accept that the natural world is all there is, having no reason to believe otherwise.

These accusations have been piled on us for so long that atheists rank at the bottom in social acceptability. But, as the girl said as she picked up the shovel, "With such a big pile of crap, there has to be a pony in here somewhere." There is.

The truth is that atheists actually make the best type of citizen and cause the least trouble of any demographic group. We go only by what

makes sense and improves life in the here and now. Our commitment to secular government has made us strong supporters of freedom of conscience and of every movement to repeal oppressive laws. This includes abolition, women's suffrage, workers' rights, civil rights, reproductive rights, gay rights, children's rights, medical research and physician aid in dying. We appreciate liberal religionists who also support these issues. We oppose religious authoritarians as politically and socially harmful.

In the workplace, we are there to get the job done. We need no accommodations for prayers, holy days, religious attire or services we refuse to provide because of religious beliefs. In politics, we have no contentious religious beliefs to impose and we don't do religious wars. In public education, our interest is in educating students about the arts and sciences, and teaching them to think critically, behave responsibly and make the most of their abilities.

## ATHEISTS CREATE MYTHS TOO

Like all humans, atheists create myths to express ideas. Unlike religious myths, which offer inspiration from the past with stories of miraculous and heroic events, atheist myths look to the future, often expressed through science fiction. Perhaps the

most powerful is the world of "Star Trek," created by atheist Gene Roddenberry, where humans have given up wars, social prejudices and divisive beliefs and used science to end hunger and poverty. That is a myth to inspire us that has some faint hope of realization.

This is the reality humans face and must deal with: We are a vulnerable species in a universe that is basically a huge debris field 15 billion light years across, full of violence and destruction. We are hunkered down on a small, unstable rock wobbling through that debris field. The life forms that evolved in the thin biosphere surrounding this rock survive by eating each other. The evolutionary process that brought us to consciousness works off of high birth and death rates with many defective products. There is no greater prescription for misery. But here we are, with one life to live and no one to turn to for help but each other. We humans have worked mightily to overcome nature's shortcomings, with the only god in sight being us, warts and all. Despite the difficulties, life remains an exciting challenge, and we accept it.

[From a February 24 essay by Marie Castle in the Minneapolis, MN *Star Tribune*. Reprinted by permission.]

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## Let's Give Credit Where Credit is Due

Here are some concluding remarks that AFS President Steve Yothment gave at the March 2 debate at the University of Georgia. The topic of the debate was "Be it hereby resolved: Man created God."

**I** recall seeing on TV recently a woman and her children rescued by the Coast Guard from their house-top in New Orleans. It was right after Hurricane Katrina went through. The house was surrounded by water. The helicopter let down a cable with a cage at the end; then, the people climbed into the cage, and were hoisted into the helicopter.

After the rescue, the woman talked to reporters. She told them, "Praise Jesus! Thanks be to Jesus that we were rescued!!"

Well, I don't think it was Jesus who rescued them! I think it was the Coast Guard! Why did she not thank the Coast Guard for rescuing them?

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to give credit where credit is due!

How about when people pray before a meal? They thank God for the food and ask that it nourishes them well. Then, they ask for God's blessing for everyone eating the food.

Why not thank the person who put the food on the table? Why not thank the person who went to the store to buy the food? Or the person who worked to get the money to buy the



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## Let's Give Credit... (continued)

food? We should give credit where credit is due.

Many of us watched the Olympics on our new HDTV sets this past week. We could see what was happening on the other side of the earth, live, in beautiful high definition color. What brought us to this place? People have worked to design the new technology. And many have worked to make TVs less expensive, so that they are affordable to the average person.

We have so many blessings all around us. We have medicines to help ward off terrible diseases. I think of Penicillin, and when it was discovered. That was a blessing to millions

of people. Antibiotics are wonderful.

Where did antibiotics come from? Did a god just hand out the solution for bacterial infections to some fellow, and then he announced it to the world? No! People studied infections for many years before they discovered how to treat them. It took the hard work of scientists to finally arrive at the solutions. Billions of dollars continue to be spent on medical research to develop new medicines and treatments for numerous ailments. And it is people who are doing all of this research.

We should be very grateful for the people who have worked so diligently

to provide the blessings that we take for granted today.

To quote Robert Ingersoll, "These blessings did not fall from the skies. These benefits did not drop from the outstretched hands of priests. They were not found in cathedrals or behind altars—neither were they found using holy candles. They were not discovered by the closed eyes of prayer, nor did they come in answer to superstitious supplication. They are the result of freedom, the gifts of reason, observation and experience—and for them all, man is indebted to man."

Let's give credit where credit is due.

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## Delusion Shrouds Christian Coalition Leader

By John Sugg, as posted at [JohnSugg.com](http://JohnSugg.com)

There's no doubt that Georgia's Christian Coalition has had an impact on state politics, using litmus tests, fundraising and politicizing pulpits in an attempt to enforce theocratic orthodoxy among elected officials and judges.

And keep in mind that we're not talking about Christianity in a general sense, but one narrow interpretation of the faith that is hostile to Jesus' message of compassion and advocacy for the downtrodden. Indeed, the Coalition's grande dame, Sadie Fields, hangs out with the leaders of the most radical of the ultra-right theocrats, the Christian Reconstructionists. She is close friends with several Reconstruction leaders, such as Gary DeMar of Powder Springs. Among other things, Reconstruction favors reinstating slavery and segregating the races — because such institutions were condoned in the Old Testament. Which, perhaps, is one reason you seldom see a black or brown face at Christian

Coalition meetings.

If there was any doubt about Fields' delusional beliefs, that doubt was dispelled at a Feb. 22 town hall meeting on immigration reform held at Clark Atlanta University. Fields and two Republican state Senate champions of punish-the-undocumented-immigrants legislation, Chip Rogers and Eric Johnson, were clearly uncomfortable in a setting where most of the audience was African-American and Hispanic.

Rogers, for example, lashed out when a Methodist minister challenged whether the proposed Senate Bill 529 reflected Christian values. Rogers railed that a person's beliefs are between that person and God. What, then, are the Republicans doing trying to enforce their twisted Christianity on the rest of the nation?

The high — or low — point of the evening belonged to Fields. After one speaker noted that when politicians target ethnic groups as scapegoats —

as Hispanics are in the GOP's legislation — what often results is a rise in hate crimes.

Fields, who gets her religion from the Old Testament and not from Jesus' words, immediately proclaimed — and I'm not making this up — that: "The majority of hate crimes are against young, white males." She claimed she was quoting FBI statistics.

The audience of about 200 people sat in stunned, disbelieving silence for a minute at the absolute absurdity. Then the jeers and boos began.

Actually, the FBI reported recently that 68 percent of the race-based hate crimes were against African-Americans. Most of the rest were against Hispanics.

For the vast racism reflected in her outburst, Fields wins my nomination for the Pharisee Award.

[From a February 23 entry at [JohnSugg.com](http://JohnSugg.com). Reprinted by permission.]

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"The hope of the world is still in dedicated minorities. The trail blazers in human, academic, scientific, and religious freedom have always been in the minority." — Martin Luther King, Jr., from *The Words of Martin Luther King*, Margaret Pepper, compiler and ed., The Harper Religious & Inspirational Quotation Book, New York: Harper & Row, 1989, p. 190.

"The doctrine that future happiness depends upon belief is monstrous. It is the infamy of infamies. The notion that faith in Christ is to be rewarded by an eternity of bliss, while a dependence upon reason, observation and experience merits everlasting pain, is too absurd for refutation, and can be relieved only by that unhappy mixture of insanity and ignorance, called 'faith.'" — Robert G. Ingersoll, from his essay "The Gods," 1872.

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## “Silver Ring Thing” No Longer Funded

A nationwide abstinence-only program lost federal funding on February 22 after a lawsuit accusing the program of using the money for Christian evangelization was settled between the ACLU and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The settlement means the Silver Ring Thing, which doles out silver rings to remind young people of their promise to abstain from sex, will not be eligible for federal money unless it

changes its program to ensure the money isn't used for religious purposes.

The organization has received more than \$1 million in federal funding during the past three years, the Associated Press reported.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit against the program in U.S. District Court in Boston in May.

In August, the Department of Health and Human Services suspended funding for the program, say-

ing, “The federal project that is funded . . . includes both secular and religious components that are not adequately separated.”

The government terminated the grant effective Jan. 31.

If it separates abstinence education from religious education, the Silver Ring Thing can reapply for federal funding for the upcoming fiscal year.

[From an February 24 article by Christopher Curtis on [planetoutinc.com](http://planetoutinc.com).]

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## Dover School District to Pay \$1 Million in Attorneys' Fees

The York County school district defeated in the first-ever lawsuit over the teaching of intelligent design has agreed to pay \$1 million to cover the plaintiffs' attorneys' fees in a settlement lawyers said was designed to discourage school boards from considering similar action in the future.

Attorneys representing a group of parents who sued the Dover Area School District in 2004 said that while the court order entitled them to \$2.067 million, they settled the judgment for half that amount to recognize the community for voting out most of the board members who had approved the policy.

“This sends a message to other school districts contemplating intelligent design that the price tag can be truly substantial, and it rewards the school district and the community for

cleaning their own house and voting out the old board,” said Richard Katskee, assistant legal director for Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

The Dover school board unanimously approved the agreement at its public meeting tonight. Board member Bryan Rehm, a plaintiff in the case, abstained.

“It never had to happen. They were warned,” said plaintiff Barrie Callahan. “I hope school boards everywhere are paying attention to this and don't do it as lightly as they did.”

In his landmark ruling in December, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones 3d found that the board had violated the Constitution when it introduced intelligent design into its high school science curriculum last year.

Despite the ruling, at least eight

state legislatures as well as state and local school boards have considered implementing policies raising questions about evolution and offering intelligent design - which posits that the complexity of life suggests the work of a designer - as an alternative.

Jones' decision, in *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, may not hold precedent outside the federal court district, but it is highly influential elsewhere, said Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education, an organization that promotes the teaching of evolution in public schools.

Scott said the Dover decision had played a role in the decision last week by Ohio's state school board to scrap a lesson plan critical of evolution.

[From a February 21 article by Amy Worden in the *Philadelphia Enquirer*.]

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## Pat Robertson Not Re-elected to Broadcaster's Board

Pat Robertson, who founded the Christian Broadcasting Network, lost re-election to the National Religious Broadcasters' board of directors last month. He was one of 38 candidates for the 33 board seats during the NRB's convention Feb. 15-22. The organization represents evangelical radio and television broadcasters.

Robertson has had a close relationship with the NRB, which named him Christian broadcaster of the year in 1989. The network's latest tax state-

ment shows that CBN donated \$161,300 to the NRB in 2004-05.

Some evangelicals were critical of Robertson in recent months after he publicly suggested Venezuela's president should be assassinated, and that Israel's prime minister was afflicted with a stroke as divine punishment.

“I would say that there was broad dismay with some of Pat's comments and a feeling they were not helpful to Christian broadcasters in general, but by no means was there any broad ef-

fort in our association to dissociate ourselves with him,” NRB President Frank Wright said at the end of the convention.

Among the successful candidates was Jay Sekulow, a close Robertson ally who is chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice in Washington. Also sitting on the NRB board is Michael D. Little, CBN's president.

[From a March 2 article by Steven G. Vegh in *The Virginian-Pilot*.]

# February Board Meeting Minutes

Present: Steve Yothment (President), Judy Thompson (VPI), Freya Harris (VPE), Bill Burton, Jack McKinney, Jim Middleton and Lew Southern.

Absent: Ed Buckner (Treasurer), Diane Buckner, George Page.

Date/Time: February 19, 2006, 2:00 PM

Minutes By: Jim Middleton

**Call to Order:** Steve Yothment called the meeting to order, and noted that a quorum was present.

**Minutes:** It was suggested that the minutes of January 15, 2006, be amended to show the person who prepared the minutes, and that future minutes also show the person who prepared them. All agreed.

Steve suggested amendment of the minutes under "Space Renovation" to say that Jack and Lew were appointed "as committee chairs" to clarify the intent to have two committees and two chairs.

Judy moved acceptance of the minutes as amended; the motion was seconded; and the motion carried.

**Board Meetings:** It was noted that one board member had been absent twice. Jack stated that the by-laws permit removal of a member after three consecutive absences. Steve will attempt to contact the member about attendance.

**Financial Report:** Ed was absent, but provided a report to Steve. We have \$5,654.00 in the checking account, but there are several loan payments to be made soon. Thus, it appears to be time for another fund drive. A yard sale was suggested as a fundraiser.

**Yard Sale:** The amount of work required for the money raised was mentioned, but it was thought that, with wide publicity and good planning, a yard sale could be successful. Freya agreed to chair the effort, with Kevin assisting.

Judy volunteered to have the sale at her house, and the date of the sale was set as April 29, 2006.

**Speakers:** Judy reported that the next speakers will be: March, John Suggs, editor of *Creative Loafing*; April, Dan Barker; and, May, Charles Lantz, D.C.

**Space Renovation:** Jack reported that he is in the process of designing the new space, and has an appointment to get access to the tenant's unit. Jack asked if we need a building permit for the renovation. It was generally agreed that we need to do what is legally required. Lew will check with the City of Roswell to see if we need a permit.

It is contemplated that the renovation will take place in July, and it was suggested that we have the July meeting in the midst of the renovation to let people see what is being done, and perhaps let them see that money is required. No firm decision was made.

**Debate:** Steve will participate in a debate at the University of Georgia on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 7:30 PM. Steve will get detailed directions to the debate, and send them to the membership by e-mail.

**Old Business:**

**Tax Notices:** Steve will try to send tax notices (combined with thank-you letters) to contributors by February 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

## AFS FY2005 Financial Report

Balance Forwarded from 2005: \$ (74.25)

### INCOME:

New Loans	29,000.00
Rent – Suite 400	9,750.00
Memberships and Subscriptions	2,430.00
Donations and Pledge Payments	12,933.76
Meeting Collections	658.53
Book Sales and Shipping	6,572.51
Merchandise Sales	864.25
Interest	16.02
Other Income	421.23
<b>Total:</b>	<b>62,572.05</b>

### EXPENSES:

AFS Center Condominium Fees	2,950.00
AFS Center Monthly Utilities	1,068.75
AFS Center Building Maintenance	1543.39
AFS Center Honoraria	1,044.17
AFS Center Mortgage	10,198.60
AFS Newsletter and Office Supply	1,325.64
Loan Service	34,575.56
Book Shipping Charges	617.22
Book Printing and Royalties	4,606.84
Merchandise	425.09
Taxes	1,588.90
Other Expenses	1,125.97
<b>Total:</b>	<b>61,070.13</b>

Balance Forwarded: 1,501.92



A student walks away from the AFS Darwin Day table with food and literature on Darwin. The event on February 10 was at Morehouse College in Atlanta. (Thanks to all AFS members who participated in this event!)



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# Baubles of Blasphemy

By Edwin F. Kagin

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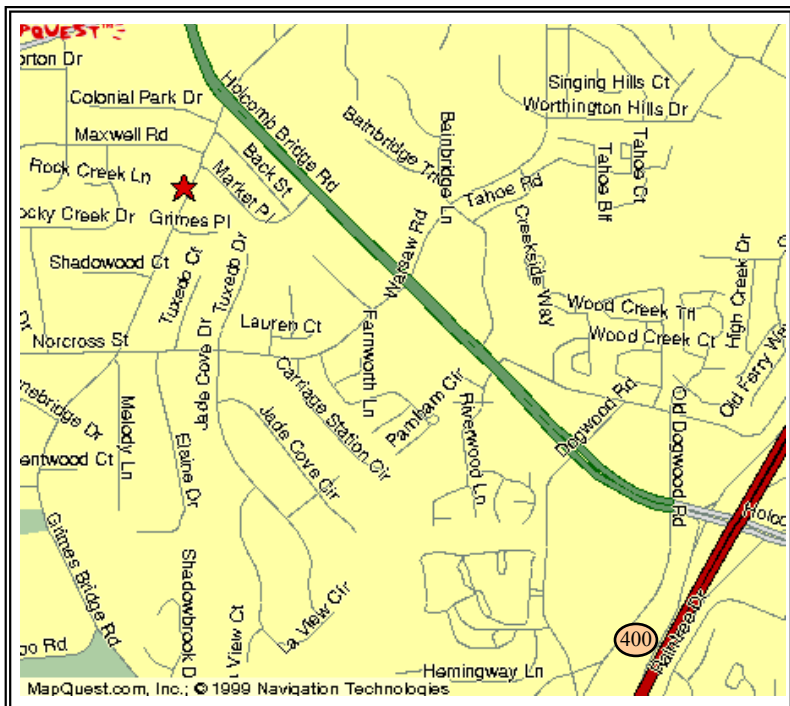
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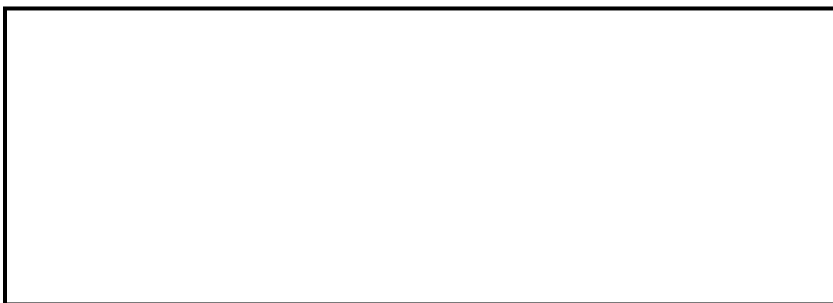
Atlanta Freethought Society

**The March Meeting:  
Sunday, March 12  
1:00 at the AF Center  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road  
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
John Sugg**



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