

# Atlanta Freethought News

*Dare to Think for Yourself*

An AFS Publication • Volume 12 Number 8 • August 2006

## The August AFS Meeting

The August 13 AFS meeting will feature AFS officer **Ed Buckner**, speaking on "Great 19th Century American Politicians, Feminists, and Statesmen." Much of the talk will be about Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899), who Ed endorses as "a great military officer, lawyer, and Republican leader; a role model and hero." Ingersoll's birthday is this Friday, August 11.

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 Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, on Friday, August 18, at 7:00 PM.

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center on Sunday, August 20, at 4:00 to 6:00 PM.

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

## 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).

## 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, August 27, at 12:30 PM. Their speaker will be Betsy Malone.

## AFS Meetings and Activities

- Aug 12: AFS Highway Cleanup, Glenridge Ramp, 10:00.
- Aug 13: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM.
- Aug 18: AFS Social, Panahar Restaurant, 7:00 PM.
- Aug 20: AFS Board Meeting at AF Center, 2:00 PM.
- Aug 20: AFS Discussion Group at AF Center, 4:00 PM.

## The August Atheist Meetup

**Atlanta Atheists** will have a "meetup" on Sunday, August 27, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Road, in Atlanta. The phone there is 404-255-5911.

## North Georgia Freethinkers Social

The **North Georgia Freethinkers** will have a Social in Cummings, GA on Saturday, August 12, at 1:30 PM. They will meet at Summits Wayside Tavern, 525 Lake Center Pkwy. RSVP to Tony King ([ngoldwe\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:ngoldwe_2000@yahoo.com)) if you plan to attend.

## Our Real Estate Purchase

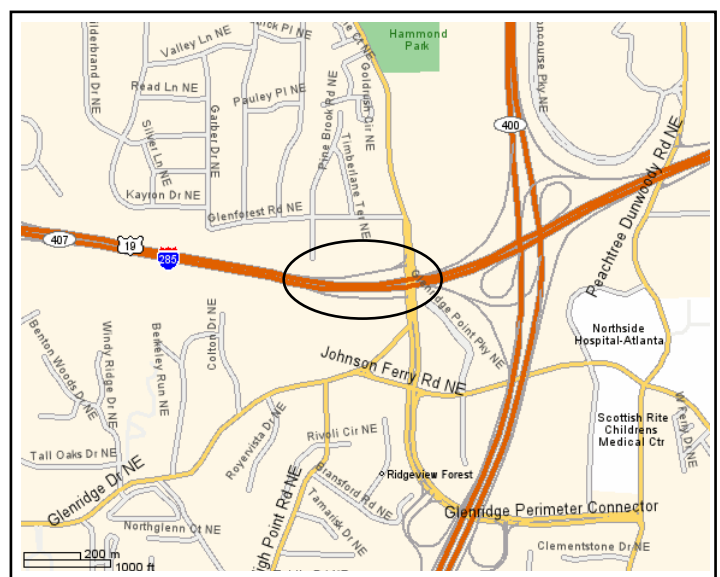
The Atlanta Freethought Society is ready to purchase a new property in Smyrna, GA. In fact, the closing was scheduled for July 26, but when the title search was done we found that the seller did not have clear title to the property. The seller hopes to resolve the matter so that we can close soon. So, we have not yet purchased the property.

We'll update members when we have more information.

## Highway Cleanup is This Saturday

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have its **Adopt-A-Highway cleanup** on Saturday, August 12, at 10:00 AM. The cleanup will be on the Glenridge Ramp at Exit 26 of I-285. (This is the long ramp that connects Glenridge Drive to I-285 near GA400.) We will clear trash on both sides of I-285.

Please park along the north ramp. The Highway Department will provide safety vests and trash bags.





## 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 13: **Ed Buckner** will speak on "Great 19th Century American Politicians, Feminists, and Statesmen."

Sept 10: **Charles Lantz** will speak on "Chiropractic... Behind the Mystique." He is currently writing a book with the same title.

Oct 8: **Dennis Martin** will speak on "Calling All Agnostics! Is Agnosticism to Atheism a Leap or a Short Step?"

Nov 12: **Clark Adams** (tentative) will speak on "How to Keep Your Freethought Group from Looking Like a Funeral" and his updated "Atheism in Media."

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 xxx-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 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**  
an AFS publication

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Steve Yothment

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For membership and subscription  
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1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite  
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Membership in AFS is \$25/year for in-  
dividuals, \$35 for households, and \$10  
for students/low income/under 21. Sus-  
taining members (individual) \$100 and  
sustaining members (households) \$125.

Subscriptions alone are \$20 for 12 is-  
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**AFS Webmaster:** Freya Harris

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# Focus on the Family Nixed at Turner Field

**I**t took just one turn at bat for the vehemently anti-gay Focus on the Family to get thrown out of Atlanta Braves' Turner Field after it co-sponsored the first Major League Baseball "Faith Day" on July 27, a promotional event meant to pack the ballpark with evangelical Christians.

But upcoming "Faith Days" at Turner Field on Aug. 13 and Aug. 26 will not include Focus on the Family in the lineup.

"We have asked the promoter [Third Coast Sports] to not include Focus on the Family in our other two Faith Day events," Beth Marshall, Braves spokesperson, said Aug. 1.

"We do not feel it is an appropriate connection for Focus on the Family to be part of this event."

Marshall declined further comment on the matter. She added the decision to host "Faith Days" was a business decision.

"We were approached by Third Coast about the event and with over 5,000 churches within 75 miles of Turner Field, it made good business sense," she said.

Focus on the Family spokesperson

Christina Loznicka acknowledged the Braves request to drop the group from future "Faith Days," but offered no reaction. "Any more questions should be directed directly to the Braves," she said in an e-mail.

Brent High, president of Third Coast Sports, praised the relationship his group established with Focus on the Family before the Atlanta Braves game in a July 26 press release on the group's website.

"To have the opportunity to help Focus on the Family expand their reach is very rewarding. We hope this is just the beginning of a much larger cooperative effort," he said.

But on Aug. 1, he said he had no comment on the Braves' decision to request Focus on the Family be removed as a sponsor.

At the Braves game on July 27, Focus on the Family representatives passed out materials to parents, teens and clergy, including information on its Focus on Parenting program ([www.focusonyourchild.com](http://www.focusonyourchild.com)) – which features a "Hot Topic" about children and homosexuality and how gay activist groups are "targeting" public

schools.

After the game, Braves pitcher John Smoltz spoke about his strong faith in Jesus to the crowd that remained in the stadium. In 2004, Smoltz drew the ire of Atlanta gays after allegedly comparing gay marriage to bestiality, according to an Associated Press story at the time.

The Braves event caught the eye of sportswriter Dave Zirin in a column posted July 28 on the website of The Nation. Zirin said the involvement of Focus on the Family, which he described as the "leading proponent" of therapy intended to cure homosexuality, "represents the ugliest edge of right-wing evangelism and its advancing influence."

Zirin said this week he was glad to hear the Braves dropped Focus on the Family, but still criticized the Faith Days events.

"Whether a repellent group like Focus on the Family is involved or not, religion belongs in Major League ballparks like a fish belongs on a bicycle," Zirin said.

[From an August 4 Action Alert from [washingtonblade.com](http://washingtonblade.com).]

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## Right on the Money?

by AFS Treasurer Ed Buckner

**W**hen the AFS Board decided on our 2006 fund drive, we did not know that we *might* be moving into a former church—and we still don't know about that, unless an article in this month's *AF News* has more information on it. We did not know, either, whether AFS members would come through financially for 2006. We set a fund-drive goal of \$20,000 for the year, thinking—but not knowing—that if we could raise that much we could have a good year and make some serious progress battling irrationality and advancing freethought.

We still don't know how the last five months or so of 2006 will unfold, nor do we yet know exactly what

pressures our finances will be subjected to. But we do know that our members support AFS. We haven't quite reached our ambitious goal, but, as of early August, we've raised \$18,031.38 in dues, subscriptions, and contributions. (We've also had extraordinary support in the form of low-interest loans as we pursue the possibility of buying the church property in Smyrna.) Most supporters paid their pledges in full when they made them, but several hundred more dollars are pledged. To make the \$20,000 goal, we only need another \$1,000 to \$1,500 in contributions.

If you've already given, please know that the members and leader-

ship are quite grateful. Formal letters acknowledging any contributions above \$100 will be sent out in January. (We're a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization, so there may be positive tax consequences for you.) Thanks!

We have not yet sent out the books promised to contributors who gave \$50 or more beyond dues, but we have not forgotten—they will be distributed at the August meeting or mailed in the week or two after that meeting to anyone not at the meeting.

If you meant to give or pledge and forgot, it is assuredly not too late. It would be grand to make our goal. Thanks again to all who have helped.

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# Kent Hovind Arrested

by Austin Cline at  
[atheism.about.com](http://atheism.about.com)

**I**nfamously known as “Dr. Dino,” an Evolution Denier and proponent of replacing modern science with Bronze Age superstitions that make up his religion, Kent Hovind has been evading the law for years — but now the law has caught up to him. Hovind has been charged with 58 different violations of federal law, including a refusal to pay \$473,818 as well as making threats against investigators.

The *Pensacola New Journal* reports: “Of the 58 charges, 44 were filed against Kent Hovind and his wife, Jo, for evading bank reporting requirements as they withdrew \$430,500 from AmSouth Bank between July 20, 2001, and Aug. 9, 2002.”

Apparently, the money was withdrawn in discreet amounts designed to avoid mandatory federal reporting.

At the couple’s first court appearance on July 13 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Miles Davis, Kent Hovind professed not to understand why he is being prosecuted. Some 20 supporters were in the courtroom.

“I still don’t understand what I’m being charged for and who is charging me,” he said.

“The debtor apparently maintains that as a minister of God, everything he owns belongs to God and he is not subject to paying taxes to the United States on money he receives for doing God’s work,” U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Lewis Killian Jr. wrote when he dismissed a claim from Hovind in 1996.

You might remember that Hovind is the one who has a “standing offer” to pay \$250,000 to anyone who can “prove” the truth of evolution. I doubt anyone has ever believed the offer to be genuine — the conditions for what qualifies as “proof” are ridiculous enough that they demonstrate that Hovind either doesn’t understand the subject or is deliberately running a scam. All that aside, however, how would he have paid had someone succeeded?

Over Kent Hovind’s protests, the judge took away his passport and guns Hovind claimed belonged to his

church.

Hovind argued that he needs his passport to continue his evangelism work. He said “thousands and thousands” are waiting to hear him preach in South Africa next month.

But Davis agreed with Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Heldmyer, who argued that “like-minded people” might secret Hovind away if he left the country.

There’s a nice demonstration of how evolution “undermines” morality while a firm belief in God and Creationism provide a sound moral foundation for one’s life: it allows a person to pretend that they are justified in not paying basic taxes, justified in avoiding banking laws, and justified in becoming such a flight risk through one’s devout supporters that one’s passport has to be taken away.

Of course Kent Hovind and his people will spin this as persecution for his Christian beliefs because people like him are just incapable of acknowledging personal wrongdoing.

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“When I was a boy I heard tell of an old farmer in Vermont. He was dying. The minister was at his bedside — asked him if he was a Christian, if he was prepared to die. The old man answered that he had made no preparation, that he was not a Christian, that he had never done anything but work. The preacher said that he could give him no hope unless he had faith in Christ, and that if he had no faith his soul would certainly be lost.”

“The old man was not frightened. He was perfectly calm. In a weak and broken voice he said, ‘Mr. Preacher, I suppose you noticed my farm. My wife and I came here more than fifty years ago. We were just married. It was a forest then and the land was covered with stones. I cut down the trees, burned the logs, picked up the stones, and laid the walls. My wife spun and wove and worked every moment. We raised and educated our children — denied ourselves. During all these years my wife never had a good dress, or a decent bonnet. I never had a good suit of clothes. We lived on the plainest food. Our hands, our bodies are deformed by toil. We never had a vacation. We loved each other and the children. That is the only luxury we ever had. Now I am about to die and you ask me if I am prepared. Mr. Preacher, I have no fear of the future, no terror of any other world. There may be such a place as hell — but if there is, you never can make me believe that it’s any worse than old Vermont.’”

— **Robert Ingersoll**, from “Why I Am An Agnostic”

“Good-by, gentlemen! I am not asking to be Governor of Illinois... I have in my composition that which I have declared to the world as my views upon religion. My position I would not, under any circumstances, not even for my life, seem to renounce. I would rather refuse to be President of the United States than to do so. My religious belief is my own. It belongs to me, not to the State of Illinois. I would not smother one sentiment of my heart to be the Emperor of the round world.”

— **Robert Ingersoll**, to the delegation from the Republican Party upon their asking him to be their candidate for Governor of Illinois -- on condition that he remain silent about his religious views (not to change them, simply to remain silent), quoted by Joseph Lewis in *Ingersoll the Magnificent*.



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# Centers Are Tax-Supported Medical Fraud

By Robyn Blumner — St. Petersburg Times

**If** you're willing to lie, deceive and intimidate others for your beliefs, the Christian Right needs you to staff the nation's Crisis Pregnancy Centers.

A new congressional study exposes what goes on in these centers for what it is: religiously grounded antiabortion stagecraft designed to lure vulnerable, pregnant women and use lies to scare them out of ending their pregnancy.

So why is the government funding them?

There are about 4,000 CPCs in the country today, as opposed to 2,000 abortion clinics. The CPCs are often affiliated with fundamentalist and evangelical religious organizations and churches. Their *modus operandi* is to appear to be a legitimate medical facility, like a Planned Parenthood clinic — in fact, they are often in the same buildings or shopping centers as abortion clinics, hoping to confuse the clinic's clients. But when unsuspecting women, usually young and low-income, come in for a free pregnancy test or ultrasound, they are bombarded with antiabortion propaganda that has little relationship to medical truth.

Since 2001, and President Bush's push to redirect tax money into faith-based institutions, the CPCs have received more than \$30 million in federal funds, much of it for abstinence-only education programs, but some for strengthening their operations.

That's millions of tax dollars underwriting religiously motivated fraud that can adversely impact women's lives and health.

A new congressional study, request-

ed by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), found that 20 of 23 federally funded centers investigated used a variety of well-worn scare tactics. Female congressional staffers who called pretending to be 17 and possibly pregnant were told by CPC counselors that abortion significantly increases the risk of breast cancer, future infertility and suffering "post-abortion syndrome."

It's all bunk. A 1997 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found no causal relationship between abortion and breast cancer, consistent with the overwhelming consensus of the medical community. As to subsequent infertility, there is no more risk of that from an abortion than from giving birth. And "post-abortion syndrome" is a made-up neurosis that is not recognized by any legitimate psychiatric association.

The medical facts are that a woman is 11 times more likely to die from complications arising from childbirth than from an abortion. But that never gets mentioned by the CPCs.

Katie Stephens, an options counselor at a Planned Parenthood affiliate and an abortion clinic in Gainesville, Fla., says she sees the CPCs' handiwork all the time. Stephens estimates that about 10 percent of her clients first had contact with a CPC. She says they often come to her harboring "real extreme" ideas about the dangers of abortion. They've been told that there is a good chance they won't be able to have future children, Stephens says, and some have asked her, "Am I going to die?"

Deb Berry, writing for *Orlando Weekly* magazine in 2003, described

her personal experience with a CPC years ago when she became pregnant with an abusive boyfriend's child. Looking for an abortion referral, she responded to an ad that read "Pregnant? Scared? We can help." When she told the Orlando-area center that she had no money, wasn't ready to be a mother and her boyfriend was abusive, a staffer told her to "just put your faith in God." And as to the abuse, she was assured that "he'll change once he sees his beautiful little baby."

Yeah, right.

The CPCs' true purpose is not to serve women in trouble but to proselytize and block women from receiving valid information about their health and options.

Many CPCs like to claim that they will provide prenatal care to women who plan to have their children, but a telling report by the Christian conservative group, the Family Research Council, worried aloud about the diversion of too many resources to future moms. The report said that "there are sharply rising numbers of women coming to the centers who are not 'at risk' for abortion. These women have decided to carry their children to term and come in for material assistance or other services. "These trends," the report notes, "could threaten the primary mission of the centers — to reach women at risk for abortion."

When our tax dollars are supporting this dangerous lunacy, the delusional have truly taken over. Medical fraud is official policy when abortion politics are at play.

[From a July 25 article by Robyn Blumner in the *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*. Reprinted here by permission.]

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"The mechanic, when a wheel refuses to turn, never thinks of dropping on his knees and asking the assistance of some divine power. He knows there is a reason. He knows that something is too large or too small; that there is something wrong with his machine; and he goes to work and he makes it larger or smaller, here or there, until the wheel will turn."

— Robert Green Ingersoll, from "The Liberty Of All" (1877)

"Ministers say that they teach charity. This is natural. They live on alms. All beggars teach that others should give."

— Robert Green Ingersoll, from "The Truth" (1897)

# Clipped

## Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

### Belief sways too far to gain credibility

Francis S. Collins, author of "The Language of God," is described in an AJC interview/book review as a former atheist, now Christian ("Geneticist splices science and faith," *Faith & Values*, July 22). According to the article, he belongs to a small organization of scientists that requires "belief in the Resurrection" as a condition for membership. On the other hand, he is reported to believe in the "big bang" theory, supports evolution and "rejects both creationism and intelligent design."

Collins' book promotes a concept he has named "BioLogos," which combines "evolution and the big bang with belief in God." He says "It's important to find harmony."

What Collins calls harmony, I call vacillating — and that what he is doing is hedging his bets for the possibility that there may be an afterlife. Either that, or it is another attempt by cunning theists to obfuscate the line between fact and fiction.

**JACK MCKINNEY**

McKinney, who lives in Kennesaw, is director of the Atlanta Freethought Society.

Jack McKinney's two letters were in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on July 29. (This is the first time we've seen two different letters from an AFS member published on the same day in the same newspaper!)

Oliver Halle's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on July 15.

Steve Yothment's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on July 15 in response to the editor's request for readers to share their views on the afterlife.

### Kudos for showing other views

I'm writing to commend The Atlanta Journal-Constitution for several recent items in Faith & Values, specifically:

"Atheists jump at chance to debate, tout morals" (May 20, 2006); "Hearing from God" (July 8, 2006); and "What God has put asunder, let no man join together" (July 8, 2006).

It is refreshing and encouraging to see articles written and published that represent less-than-mainstream viewpoints.

We who are of no religious persuasion are equally honest, have integrity, are good, patriotic citizens and have values of the highest caliber — but our opinions are frequently stifled simply because we are "non-believers." And that is neither right nor fair in this land of "freedom."

**JACK MCKINNEY**

Director of the Atlanta Freethought Society  
Kennesaw

### God never engages in double talk

For those of us who do not hear the direct voice of God, we have to rely on those who claim they do. The problem is that the claimants have different responses to the same issues. How does one test for truth when the voices they hear provide different answers to questions about abortion, the death penalty, stem cell research, war, etc.? Surely God does not provide guidance with opposite conclusions. Why would anyone take these charlatans seriously?

**OLIVER G. HALLE**  
Marietta

It should be obvious to any thinking person that there is no consciousness, and therefore **no thoughts or emotions, after death.** Rather than be concerned about an afterlife, I think it would be far better to make life a "heaven" for others here on earth. Caring for others is a noble goal and is worthy of our concern and diligent effort! This life is the only chance we have to make the world a better place. As Doc told Marty in the movie "Back to the Future," "The future is in your hands. So make it a good one!"

**STEVE YOTHMENT**  
Atlanta

"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.' What man, who ever thinks, can believe that blood can appease God? And yet, our entire system of religion is based upon that belief. The Jews pacified Jehovah with the blood of animals, and according to the Christian system, the blood of Jesus softened the heart of God a little, and rendered possible the salvation of a fortunate few. It is hard to conceive how the human mind can give assent to such terrible ideas, or how any sane man can read the Bible and still believe in the doctrine of inspiration."

— Robert Green Ingersoll, from "The Gods"

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## More Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Ed Buckner's letter was in the Marietta Daily Journal on July 25, 2006.

### Columnist trying to have it both ways on speech

Columnist John Leo ("Free speech is loser where religion is concerned," Thursday's MDJ) seems to be claiming that the ACLU chooses "a speech code guaranteeing no one's feelings are hurt" over religious freedom. I cannot speak for my fellow members of the ACLU, but Leo's solution includes far more than he's admitting, and his claim that religious speech is all that is restricted is bogus. Leo brushes off as trivial what he calls the "catch-22" in all this, the school system's involvement in editing and controlling what the students can say – but that involvement is at the heart of the matter. If a school official, a paid agent of all taxpayers, can control at all what a student says or doesn't say, then that official must prevent religious proselytizing, racism, wild political fulminations, vicious rudeness, and other speech that some taxpayers may not wish to sponsor. Mere "sensitivity" and hurt feelings aren't the issue here – real liberty for all taxpayers and for the student is at issue.

Leo insists that high school valedictorians "have a clear First Amendment right to say what they think is relevant on the big day." But either there are limits or there aren't. Leo implies that the valedictorian's speech is not a "school-sponsored speech" in a "state-sponsored forum." But if Brittany McComb must be allowed to credit the Lord Jesus Christ for her academic success, then next year's valedictorian must be allowed to be racist or to denounce Christianity or to promote communism or to be sexist or to take the name of the Lord "in vain" or otherwise to speak freely in ways that may make the school administrators – and the taxpaying public – uncomfortable or even outraged.

John Leo – and all of us – cannot have it both ways.

Ed Buckner  
Southern Director,  
Council for Secular Humanism  
Smyrna

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## Religious Right Groups Seek Limits on Church-State Lawsuits

Don't Discourage Americans From Asserting Their Religious Liberty Rights In Court,  
Americans United's Lynn Urges Senate Panel

On August 2, Americans United for Separation of Church and State urged the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution not to make it more difficult for Americans to bring church-state violations into court.

The subcommittee was hearing testimony from lawyers affiliated with TV preachers Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson on a proposal to deny legal fees and out-of-pocket expenses to plaintiffs who win lawsuits under the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. They are supporting S. 3696, "The Veterans' Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals, and Other Public Expressions of Religion Protection Act."

The proposal is being touted by Religious Right groups as a way to discourage lawsuits challenging religious displays on public property. But, in fact, it is much more far-reaching and would deny reimbursement in conflicts ranging from government-

sponsored religion in public schools to taxpayer funding for religious schools and other ministries.

"This bill is intended to make it harder for people to stand up for their religious liberty," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "It would be an outrage if Falwell and Robertson got away with this. Our constitutional freedoms don't count for much if individuals don't have the financial means to bring their legitimate claims before the bar of justice."

Americans who believe that government has violated their rights by unconstitutionally getting involved in matters of religion are free to file lawsuits. If the lawsuits are successful, current federal law allows for the recovery of reasonable attorneys' fees and out-of-pocket expenses. If S. 3696 passes, however, that will no longer be the case.

Lynn noted that the bill would have a severe negative impact on religious minorities. Lynn also asserted that if the bill passes, it will set a precedent for Congress to deny attorneys' fees in other types of litigation. Currently, attorneys' fees are recoverable in a wide range of successful cases against the government involving constitutional and civil rights violations.

"Americans should have the ability to seek justice in the courts if they believe their rights have been violated," Lynn said. "This bill is an effort to slam the courthouse door in their faces because some members of Congress don't like the outcome of some of these church-state cases. It's fundamentally un-American."

Several national organizations that support civil rights and civil liberties have joined forces to oppose the measure.

[From an August 2 AU press release.]

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# July 2006 AFS Board Meeting Minutes

Present: Steve Yothment (Pres.), Judy Thompson (VPI), Freya Harris (VPE), Ed Buckner (Treasurer), Jack McKinney, Diane Buckner, Bill Burton, Lew Southern, George Page

Visiting member: Mark Banks

Date/Time: July 16, 2006; 2:05 PM

Minutes by: George Page

**Call to Order:** Steve Yothment called the meeting to order. A quorum was established.

**Minutes:** The June 16 board meeting minutes were accepted as posted in the July newsletter.

**Financial Report:** Ed presented the second quarter 2006 financial report. The report does not include donations received from the fund raising letter since letters went out just before the end of the quarter. Ed mentioned that we have received donations in the amount of \$17,753.16 for the entire year up to July 16. This brings us very close to the \$20,000 we were trying to raise from the letter.

Jack requested that we receive a cumulative report for the year as well as just the period report. The suggestion was made that if any of us were looking for specific information to make a request of the treasurer individually.

The phone answering service has been cancelled. This will be reflected in the newsletter and the website.

**Space Renovation/Relocation:** Ed sent an email to the board discussing title insurance and a title search for the property. Jack did the leg work. An attorney has to be contracted to do the title search. In the email we received from Maxwell, the cost is \$5k and our share is \$2k. On Monday, we will contact the closing attorneys. Lew is to call first thing on Monday. To clarify, we are looking for owners' title insurance. At best guess, the closing is to be held on July 24 or 25. The board voted that either or both Steve and Ed are the official representatives at closing. The motion was seconded and the vote was unanimous.

We are looking to cover the building for liability and fire only. We need to get a quote from our current provider for content insurance at replacement cost.

Judy investigated a mail box for the new location. She suggested that our best bet would be a slot in the door. We are still not sure if the postal service will deliver to the door at the new location. Diane will send a link to Judy on the type of lockable box she saw. Ed suggested that we defer the discussion until we know more about the delivery to the new location.

**Cleanup at CSPBC:** Lew indicated that we will need a dumpster at the new property for removed ceiling tiles, debris under the building, and for clearing the land. Trees need to be trimmed and small brush needs to be cleaned up. We will schedule the clean up and improvement to start the first two weekends after closing. We don't have prices on renting a dumpster, but Lew has called to get quotes.

Judy moved that the board authorize Lew to spend up to \$5,000 to spend on renovations and repairs. Ed seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

**Selling the two suites:** Mark Banks, AFS member, answered the board's call for realtors to assist with selling the two condos. He made a presentation of his research on the sales in this market. His research suggests that we should sell the condos at \$104 per sq. ft. which matches research done by others.

We do have an offer from Sonenburg to charge us only 5% commission if we give him exclusive listing. In discussing using various realtors, the difference of 5% to 8% in commission may be the result of a single agent closing as opposed to a split commission. Each month the condos sit empty costs us \$1,000.

At this point, Freya Harris left the meeting for another appointment.

After further discussion on how to proceed with choosing a realtor, Ed made a motion to communicate via email by Wednesday night at midnight to make a decision on who would represent us. The motion carried. We also agreed to notify Mark that he was the leading candidate to sell the suites.

At 4 pm Lew departed the meeting, but we still maintained a quorum.

**Other Business:** Bill suggested that we create a display to show the history of the church. Someone mentioned that the Georgia Baptist archive should have a history of the church. Jack suggested we have an educational flyer emphasizing that the building was part of a community 150 years ago and we are saving it from destruction. There are many options to consider and the board decided to table these suggestions for another time.

Steve moved forward with the agenda and called on Jack McKinney to discuss the issue of the AFS Forum on Yahoo. Jack asked what was the purpose and scope of the forum. Was it specifically for the members of AFS or is it an open forum. Steve and Bill are administrators but not really mediators. The question was asked if we should or could regulate the forum to restrict usage. George volunteered to investigate other usage policies and to draft a usage policy for the AFS Forum on Yahoo.

**Future Meetings:** Ed suggested we have an open house and invite guests from surrounding states. Jack suggested that we put out a flyer to hand out as people pass by while we are working on the new place and to put a plaque on the building. Something along the line of "Future home of the Atlanta Freethought Society" We should mention the educational aspect of the organization and that we are a 501 (c)(3) non-profit group.

Judy reported the following speakers for AFS meetings:

September 10 – Charles Lantz

October 8 – Dennis Martin

November 12 – Clark Adams

August meeting possibilities – Ingersoll or new location. TBA.

If anyone has any suggestions for a speaker or a subject to be discussed at future AFS meeting, please contact Judy Thompson.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:28 PM.

The next meeting of the board of directors is scheduled for Sunday August 20 at 2 PM.



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(Or renew your membership with this form!)



If you've enjoyed what you've read, we enthusiastically invite you to join the Atlanta Freethought Society. Every month you will get our acclaimed monthly newsletter the *Atlanta Freethought News*, voting rights in the organization—and enjoyment of the superb speakers we have coming up, as well as the social and activist events that we sponsor!

**Individual memberships:** One person can become a member for \$25 per year.

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Thank you for all your support and we look forward to your being with us in the coming months!

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# Baubles of Blasphemy

By Edwin F. Kagin

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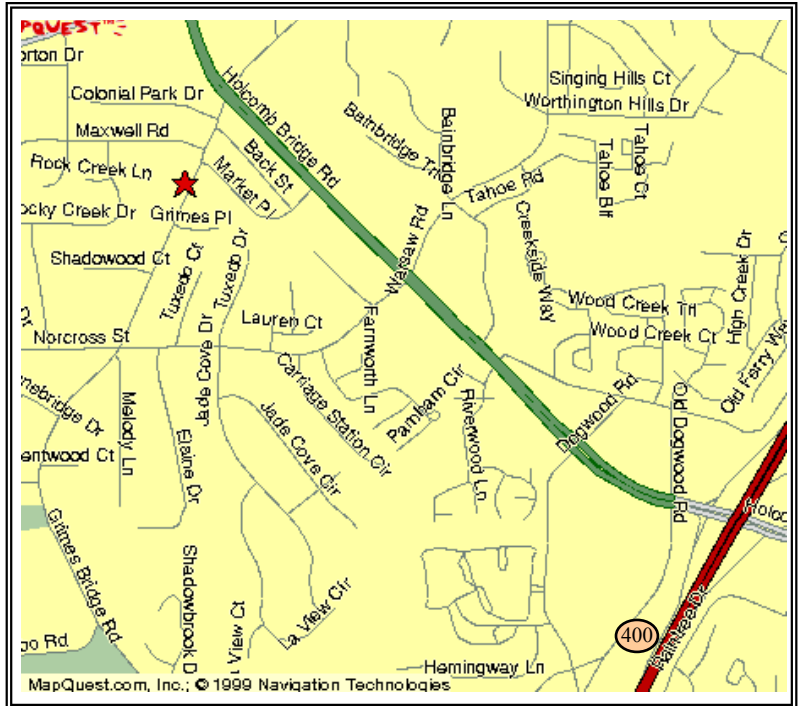
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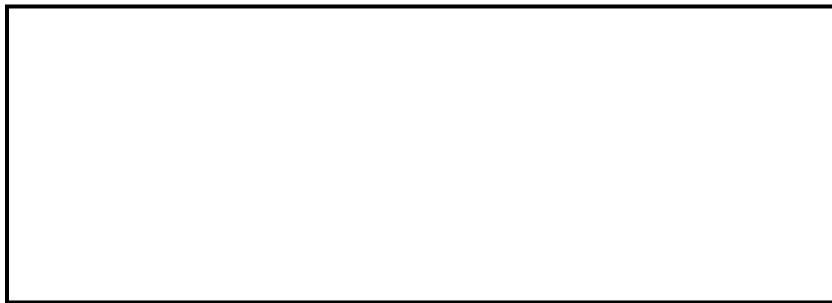
Atlanta  
Freethought  
Society

**The August 13 Meeting:  
1:00 at the AF Center  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road  
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Ed Buckner on  
"19<sup>th</sup> Century Statesmen"**



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