

Atlanta Freethought News

Dare to Think for Yourself

An AFS Publication

• Volume 14 Number 4

• April 2008

Rob Boston to Speak At the April Meeting At Our New Location

The April 13 AFS meeting will feature a talk by **Robert Boston**, Assistant Director of Communications for American United for Separation of Church and State and the Assistant Editor of AU's monthly magazine *Church & State*.

Boston joined the Americans United staff in 1987. He often writes about the political goals of the Religious Right and other church-state issues. He covers the U. S. Supreme Court for *Church & State* and has attended oral arguments in every church-state case at the high court since 1989.

Boston has been on NBC's "Nightly News," CNN's "Anderson Cooper," Fox News Channel's "O'Reilly Factor" and other programs. He is the author of several books, including *Why the Religious Right Is Wrong About Separation of Church and State*.

Boston will speak on "A Defense of the Secular State," explaining how secular government helps foster freedom for believers and non-believers and why alternatives to secularism are unsatisfying.

The meeting will be at 1:00 at our new property, **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Smyrna, GA. (Feel free to arrive early for discussion and snacks.) To get there, get on I-285 (the perimeter road around Atlanta) and take Exit 16 (Atlanta Road) toward Atlanta. Go ½ mile and then turn right onto N. Church Lane. Go only 300 feet to the Atlanta Freethought Hall, which is on the left.



Progress On Our New Property

Work has progressed nicely on the new AFS property in Smyrna, GA. The inside of the building is now painted, and it looks pretty good! (See the article on page 5.)

This month's AFS meeting will be at the new location, so please allow enough time to find the place if you haven't been there yet. If you arrive early, you can enjoy some great conversation with other freethinkers, and you can inspect our work!

The March AFS Social

The next **AFS Social** will be at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, on Friday, April 18, at 7:00 PM.

The AFS Reading Group

The **AFS Reading Group** will meet on Thursday, April 24, at 7:30 PM at Borders Books & Music (4745 Ashford-Dunwoody Rd, Atlanta GA 770-396-0004). Discussion this month is on Robert Ingersoll. Read anything by him, and come to comment on what you read.

For the May 22 meeting, the group is reading *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and will meet at Wordsmiths Books, 141 E. Trinity Place, in Decatur.

For details on the group, contact Forrest Greene or Brian Shriver at bookclub@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Meetings and Activities

- Apr 13: AFS Board Meeting at AF Hall, 11:00 AM.
- Apr 13: AFS General Meeting at AF Hall, 1:00 PM.
- Apr 18: AFS Social, Panahar Restaurant, 7:00 PM.
- Apr 24: AFS Reading Group at Borders Books, 7:30 PM.

Other Meetings of Interest

The **Fellowship of Reason** meets on the first Sunday of every month at 1:00 PM at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see <http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the AF Center on Sunday, April 20, at 12:30 PM. Sandy Arroyo, a public school teacher for thirty years, will speak on "End Times or Changing Times: A look at tomorrow through our changing cultural, economic, historical, and social patterns."

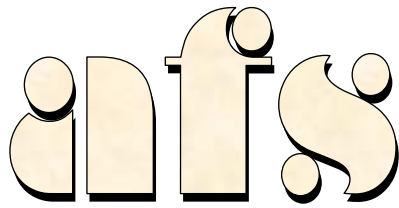
The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the Atlanta Freethought Center every Tuesday evening at 8:00 PM. SOS is the secular substitute for Alcoholics Anonymous.

A new **Freethought Discussion Group** meets in Fayetteville, GA on *some* Wednesdays at 7:30 PM at Starbucks on Hwy 54. The group also meets for lunch on *some* Saturdays. For more information on the group, email Shelby, the group's leader, at freediscussion@hotmail.com.

There will be a "**meetup**" for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, April 13, at 6:00 PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur, GA.

Yet another **meetup** for Atlanta atheists is scheduled for Sunday, April 27, at 4:00 PM at Charlie Mopps Public House, 5830 Roswell Rd. NE, in Atlanta.

In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted. -Bertrand Russell



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.

Apr 13: Rob Boston of Americans United for Separation of Church/State will speak.

May 11: Austin Dacey, author of *Secular Conscience*, will speak.

June 15: Tony King, on "Sumerian Influence on Religion and Western Culture."
This meeting will include a potluck lunch at our new property.

July 13: (tentative) Secular lobbyist Lori Lipman Brown will speak.

Aug 10: TBD

AFS Email Lists

The **AFS eNews** Announcement list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities and news. The **AFS Forum** is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation, and religion. Visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org> for more info or to subscribe.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of free-thinkers, 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

Editor

Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500
Roswell, GA 30075-3965
or phone Steve at 678-364-8703
or send e-mail to SteveYoth@aol.com.

Atlanta Freethought Society

President

Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

VP for Internal Communication

Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020

VP for External Communication

Walter Bell – 404-284-xxxx

Secretary

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Treasurer

Ed Buckner – 770-432-3049

Board of Directors

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

Bill Burton – 770-469-1228

Freya Harris – 404-845-2276

Tony King – 706-886-9224

Jack McKinney – 770-424-5004

Lew Southern – 770-509-8272

The Atlanta Freethought News

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Add \$15 to receive AFNews by mail.

Sustaining members (individual) \$100
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Deceptive By Design: What Exactly Does FRC Want To Teach Our Children About Origins?

By Rob Boston

Part of my job involves reading Religious Right fund-raising mail and newsletters. It's like stepping into some Bizarro World where up is down, black is white, and truth is determined not by factual evidence but by whatever the Maximum Leader says.

The Family Research Council's *Washington Watch* is a good example of this. It's always entertaining.

"How FRC Is Fighting Tax-Funded Atheism in Schools," blared the envelope of a recent mailing. As I opened it, I thought to myself, "I'll bet this is about evolution."

Inside the newsletter, sure enough, was an article attacking evolution.

Sigh. I'll state the obvious: Evolution does not equal atheism. Sure, some people who accept evolution as the bedrock principle underlying the biological sciences are atheists. Others are Christians. Some are Jews. Still others may be Buddhists and so on. Many, many religious people—including lots of Christians—accept the reality of evolution. (One of them is a guy FRC might have heard of: Pope Benedict XVI.)

The FRC is angry because the National Academy of Sciences and the Institutes of Medicine, two of the nation's most prestigious scientific organizations, have issued a new publication¹ calling for better instruction about evolution in U.S. public schools.

The booklet², *Science, Evolution, and Creationism*, doesn't hold back in branding creationism a religiously-grounded concept that has no place in public schools. To combat a publication produced by the nation's leading scientific experts, FRC dispatched

Tony Perkins, its president, who is a former Louisiana state legislator, and Peter Sprigg, FRC vice president for policy. Neither man is a scientist.

Science, Evolution and Creationism, the FRC asserts, equates old-style, young-Earth creationism with "intelligent design" (ID). Actually, the publication does no such thing, although it points out that both ideas are ultimately tied to religious views of origins that have failed to produce any valid scientific research.

All of this makes me wonder: What exactly does FRC believe about creationism these days? If Perkins is so offended that the National Academy conflated creationism with ID, does this mean Perkins and the FRC oppose traditional creationism? Do Perkins and the FRC now reject creationist claims that fundamentalists have pushed for years, mainly that the Earth is 6,000-10,000 years old, that dinosaurs and humans lived at the same time and that the Grand Canyon was created by swirling waters retreating from Noah's flood?

I would like to know the answers to these questions—but no one at FRC will answer them. About this time last year, I appeared³ on CNN's "Anderson Cooper" with Charmaine Yoest, then a highly placed FRC staff member. My suspicion is that Yoest and many others at the FRC are old-style creationists who want a lot more than ID taught in the schools, so I asked her several times how old she believes the Earth to be. She refused to answer.

For me, this matter is not theoretical. I have two children in public schools. If Perkins, Sprigg, Yoest and the rest of the FRC gang want to

change what my children are taught in science classes, I figure I have a right to know exactly what those changes will be. Our planet cannot simultaneously be 6,000 years old and five billion years old. So I'm asking: Hey, FRC, which is it going to be in the classroom? The fact that the FRC doesn't want to answer me says a lot.

One more thought on this: Some scientists do occasionally believe things that turn out to be wrong. The great thing about science is that it has self-correcting features built into it. Hundreds of years ago, some scientists believed maggots spontaneously generated on rotten meat. In 1668, Francesco Redi tested this with a classic experiment⁴ using three pieces of meat. One was wrapped in a piece of paper, one was left out in the open and the third was covered with cheesecloth. Flies could easily lay eggs on the open piece and on the cheesecloth, resulting in maggots. But they could not reach the covered piece, which remained free of maggots. Other scientists were able to duplicate the experiment and got the same results. So much for spontaneous generation.

If advocates of ID or any other form of creationism believe they have a sound scientific argument, there is a mechanism and a forum they can use: the double-blind experiment and the peer-reviewed journal. In other words, the tiny number of scientists who agree with Perkins on evolution should stop whining and start emulating Francesco Redi.

[From a March 25 weblog by Rob Boston⁵ at <http://blog.au.org>. Reprinted here by permission.]

Footnote Links:

1. See <http://blog.au.org/2008/01/04/good-book-science-academy-says-dont-confuse-religion-with-biology/>.
2. See <http://www.national-academies.org/morenews/20080104.html>.
3. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40Q8p3GqPqQ>.
4. See http://www.microbiologytext.com/index.php?module=Book&func=displayarticle&art_id=27.
5. See <http://blog.au.org/author/boston/>.

U.S. Must Embrace Obligations of Global Citizenship and Ratify and Apply International Treaties, Says Leading Humanist Organization

By Austin Dacey, Center for Inquiry (From a March 31 CFI Press Release)

The recent United States Supreme Court decision in *Medellin v. Texas*, allowing the State of Texas to ignore a judgment of the International Court of Justice, highlights the country's shameful failure to live up to its obligations as a global citizen, according to the Center for Inquiry, a leading humanist organization.

The Center for Inquiry's representative to the United Nations, Dr. Austin Dacey, commented, "If the United States has made a unique contribution to the world, it is the foundational American idea that the power of nation-states is shaped by norms that come before and go beyond the nation-state."

The International Court of Justice had ruled that the convictions of José Medellin and other Mexican nationals be reviewed because they had been denied their rights under the Vienna Convention—a treaty to which the United States is a party. The Vienna Convention requires foreign consu-

lates to be informed when one of their citizens is arrested.

The Supreme Court's decision forms part of a disturbing pattern in recent years in which the United States has either repudiated or refused to honor its international commitments and obligations. Since 2000, United Nations members have committed themselves to 929 new treaty actions. In that same period, the United State reversed its support for at least five major treaties, including the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the International Criminal Court.

In a recent editorial in *Free Inquiry* magazine, Center for Inquiry chairman Dr. Paul Kurtz observes that this stance represents a betrayal of America's commitments. "Following World War II, there was great support in the United States for a new kind of world order based on cooperation among

nations," Kurtz said. "This country was in the vanguard of those proclaiming and defending explicit visions of human rights. By contrast, U.S. foreign policy in recent years has been unilateral and preemptive, costing us friends worldwide."

Refusal to honor our obligations to the global community squanders this country's moral capital around the world.

As an expositor of humanist values that transcend boundaries of state, ethnicity, and sect, the Center for Inquiry calls on the United States to honor our international commitments and implement fully the provisions of the Vienna Convention and all other international treaties and covenants to which the United States is a party.

The Center for Inquiry also calls upon Congress and the leadership of both major parties to work to ratify other important treaties that have been accepted by the vast majority of the international community.

Georgia Bill Gives Tax Breaks for Private School Scholarships

On April 1, the Georgia General Assembly gave final approval to a ground-breaking school choice bill that would eventually provide scholarships for children to leave public schools for private institutions.

The Senate approved¹ HB 1133 by a vote of 32 to 20, sending it to Gov. Sonny Perdue for consideration. The vote was largely along party lines.

If Perdue signs the bill into law, pri-

ivate citizens and corporations could get income tax credits for donating money to non-profit scholarship organizations. Those organizations, in turn, would provide scholarships to parents who want to pull their children out of public schools and send them to private ones.

Rep. David Casas (R-Lilburn), sponsored the bill. Following the Senate vote, he hailed the passage of what

could be the most impactful school choice legislation to clear the Legislature in decades. Casas said Perdue's staff has not committed to signing or vetoing the bill.

The House has withdrawn another bill on school choice², SB 458, which would grant taxpayer-funded vouchers to students to attend private school, if their public school receives failing grades for seven consecutive years or loses its accreditation. Its future is uncertain.

Footnote Links:

1. See http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/sum/hb1133.htm.
2. See http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/sum/sb458.htm.

From Americans United for Separation of Church and State:

- See the March 6 debate between the Rev. Barry Lynn and Jacques Berlinerblau vs. Chuck Colson and Bishop Harry Jackson on "Religion should have no place in politics or government" at: <http://millercenter.org/public/debates/religion>.
- See the March 26 First Freedom First simulcast "Everything you Always Wanted to Know About Separation of Church and State... but were afraid to ask!" at: <http://www.firstfreedomfirst.org>.
- Americans United settled with a Texas school district in a lawsuit over prayer at graduation ceremonies on March 7. They agreed to not have students vote on whether to pray: <http://www.au.org/site/News2?abbr=pr&page=NewsArticle&id=9709>.

More Work Done at AFS's New (Old) Property

By Steve Yothment

For the past month, AFS members have continued to help with painting and maintenance of the new AFS property, a former church building. There was a lull in the activity in early March because someone called the Georgia EPD (Environmental Protection Division), who in turn notified AFS that we must hire an inspector to assess the paint in the building for lead content before any work is done inside the building. We did so, and, not surprisingly, lead was found, but only in the trim around the windows. This was treated by an appropriate lead abatement company, and the matter is now resolved.

So, much work has been completed. The pavilion metal structure had rust removed and was sealed and painted; more brush was cleared and hauled away; the building's doors were replaced; the interior of the building was repainted; the bathrooms (one of them to be handicapped-accessible) were greatly improved; exit signs were installed, and many other things.

So many people have been involved in the renovations that it's hard to keep up with all of the names. We tried to thank all of the helpers in last month's issue of AFNews, but we left out some names. So, we will add to that list the following people, with a lot of gratitude for the work they have done:

Dr. David Center, accidentally omitted from the earlier list; various jobs.

Karon Park, Diane Buckner, and Ed Buckner, for supplying food and morale building encouragement. (And in Ed's case, for politicking and lobbying with government officials, neighborhood associations, and the local Historical Society.)

Dr. Dennis Martin, for extensive (and difficult) mowing and brush-slaying.

Phil Geary, for untold hours of work doing fun things like wire-brushing rust, clambering on top of our pavilion to treat and paint, welding angle-iron supports up for the pavilion, and more.

Mark Banks, for, among other things,

securing materials at low costs and for devoting almost all of his birthday to installing our front doors and doing trimwork.

Doug Hattersley, for many hours (and many days) of skillful carpentry, plumbing, and other work, happily delivered, and...

Lew Southern, for more work and more kinds of work than probably everyone else combined, and with no complaints about the work. (And he had plenty that he could have complained about, because he is the one who got to deal with the bureaucrats, the environmental support technicians, and irresponsible complainers.)

Come early to the April meeting at our new place and check out the improvements! We think AFS members will like it.

(By the way, for now we are calling the new place "Atlanta Freethought Hall," to distinguish it from our old place, "Atlanta Freethought Center.")

— Steve



Doug Hattersley and Jack McKinney removed the old sign.

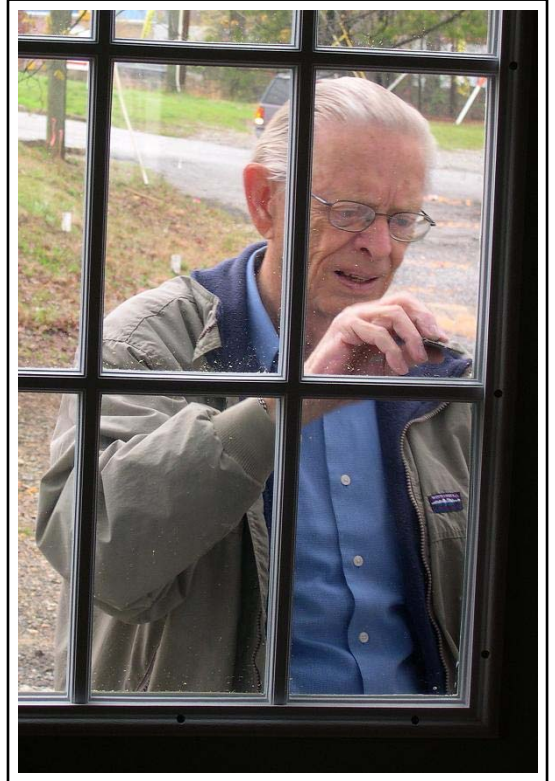


Phil Geary and Lew Southern painted the Pavilion roof. (They're 20+ feet above the ground!)

"To those searching for truth, not the truth of dogma and darkness, but the truth brought by reason, search, examination, and inquiry, discipline is required. For faith, as well intentioned as it may be, must be built on facts, not fiction. Faith in fiction is a damnable false hope." — Thomas A. Edison



Bruce Herr and Doug Hattersley did roof repair.



Lew Southern removed paint from windows.



The paint crew breaks for lunch: Dennis Martin, Lew Southern, Phil Geary, Steve Yothment, Mark Banks.



Dennis Martin is ready for more painting!



← Jack McKinney did plenty of yard-work.

(Photos are by Ed Buckner, who also worked.)

Local Pastor Held on Molestation Charges

The Rev. Derek Gillet, pastor of Cornerstone Community Chapel in Cumming, GA, was arrested on March 7 on two counts of aggravated child molestation and two counts of sodomy.

"Never would I have dreamed he would do something like this," said Gillett's former pastor, the Rev. Calvin Haney of Midway United Methodist Church.

Gillett, a 38-year-old resident of Alpharetta, had been a youth director at Haney's Alpharetta church until last May when he left to start another church.

Now he's being held without bond at the Cherokee Adult Detention center on charges that carry the potential

of life in prison.

An acquaintance of the victims reported the alleged molestation to a Cherokee County deputy Thursday afternoon, according to official reports. The woman told the deputy that Gillett had been molesting at least one of the victims for "some time," the report said. One of the victims confided in the woman, who, in turn, informed police.

Before starting Cornerstone on Atlanta Highway last year, Gillett had been a youth director at Midway United Methodist Church.

The Cherokee sheriff's department won't say how Gillett knew the two victims. Sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Jay Baker said both churches were noti-

fied of the arrest.

"They [the victims] are not members of [either] congregation, nor have we had any reports of other possible victims," Baker said.

Gillett was ordained as a Baptist minister last April at his father's church in Palmetto, Fla.

He had worked for at least a year at Midway prior to his ordination.

Ed Tomlinson, a superintendent with the United Methodist Church, said Gillett started, but never completed the process of becoming an ordained Methodist minister.

[From a March 12 AJC article by Marcus Garner, and a press release from <http://www.cherokeega-sherrif.org>.]

Battle Waged Over Future of Bethel Park

Public or private: YMCA and Forsyth County are competing for ownership of the lakeside site.

A controversy is developing over two groups that are working to take over Bethel Park, on the shores of Lake Lanier in Forsyth County.

The Forsyth County Commission and the YMCA of Metro Atlanta see plenty of potential in the 60-plus-acre park owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Each wants to take it over and has vigorously campaigned to make that happen.

The county commissioners want to preserve the park for year-round public use, with 75 camping sites, a kayak and canoe landing area, a beach and educational components. A sales tax, which passed overwhelmingly last month, gave them the money to do it.

The YMCA wants to transform the park into a kids day camp and retreat, and has spent an estimated \$300,000 since 2003 putting its plans to paper.

The corps has just finished taking public feedback and is not giving any indication what, or when, it might decide. "Both parties have an equal chance at this point," said E. Patrick Robbins, chief of legislative and public affairs for the Corps' Mobile District. "The commander must make a decision as to which one would best

serve the public interest, or he could decide that it is in the best public interest for the Corps to maintain the property."

Atlanta attorney Harry Foster is one of about 2,000 people who in recent weeks has pleaded with the Corps to put management of the park in the county's hands. "Literally, my whole family has grown up at Bethel Park," said Foster, who lives next door. Foster can't fathom not being able to boat, fish and walk the family dog at the park.

"It's been frustrating, of course," he said. "It's something you think you can count on. It's a federal park, and it's next door to you."

Michael Durkin, who started Friends of Bethel Park, said a decision in the YMCA's favor would be detrimental to the thousands of regular park-goers, as well as to the public.

"Our fight has been against any private entity taking over the park and closing it to the public for their own profit and gain," Durkin said.

County Commissioner Dave Richard said he would expect the county to file a lawsuit if the Corps decides to let the YMCA take over Bethel Park.

Richard said the enhancements that the county plans will make Bethel Park more attractive to the public. "We'll have a nice balance of recreation and green space," he said.

[This article is condensed from a March 16 article by Nancy Badertscher in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.]

The above article begs the question, "Under what conditions can the federal government sell or lease property to a religious organization like the YMCA?" (The YMCA claims to be a Christian organization on their website. See <http://www.ymca.net>.)

A person who lives in Cumming, GA recently emailed two AFS officers about this controversy. He noted, "I live in the area... and just happened to notice that on the site sketch [at Bethel Park] the YMCA has a 500 person capacity chapel showing." If the property is leased to the YMCA, it would mean a chapel will probably be built on government property!

We have more questions than answers on this issue, but we will continue to monitor it. If you have more information on it, please contact AFS president Steve Yothment.

Letters To The Editor from AFS Members

Alcohol law one more sign Georgia is backward

The upholding of any law that has a religious meaning behind it, such as no alcohol sales on Sunday, defies separation of church and state as granted by the First Amendment of the Constitution. Sunday is just another day in a secular society and any restriction based simply on the day of the week is indefensible. There are hundreds of non-Christian religions that worship on days other than Sunday and there are many citizens of Georgia that don't worship any supernatural being on Sunday or any other day.

The ability to purchase alcohol in a restaurant or bar, but not in a retail store to enjoy at home, also promotes drunk driving. If a person really wants to drink he is forced to go outside of his home, usually in a motor vehicle and imbibe at a bar.

The law just doesn't make any sense in a reasonable, free-thinking, secular society. This law, along with praying for rain on the capitol steps, and many other examples continue to show the rest of the county what a backward state Georgia is.

DAVID DRISCOLL, Johns Creek

Pedophiles Still Have Access to Children

This article (*The Pedophile Next Door, March 20*) seemed to focus on the internet and nothing else. But pedophiles are still getting access to children in the same ways they did long before the internet came around. They weasel their way into the workforce. They get jobs where they know they will have easy access to kids. Teachers, coaches, youth counselors, baby-sitters, and pastors.

Don't forget the greatest offender of all, the Catholic Church. At least the schools allow the legal justice system to bring their offenders swiftly to punishment. The church just transfers their offenders to another parish.

DONNA GORE, Roswell

David Driscoll's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on March 2.

Ed Buckner's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on March 10.

Donna Gore's letter was in the *Roswell Beacon* on April 3.

Pray in your own name, not everyone's

The correct answer to the question your article posed ("Perdue's prayer answered? Rainfall heavier" *Metro*, March 4) is the same as always about prayer: There's no way to tell. Prayer believers never count the misses, always count the hits and claim any possible outcome as the best possible one. If prayer led to actual good solutions, we'd already have world peace, no tsunamis, no fatal childhood diseases and much more.

As one of the leaders of the protest against Sonny Perdue's rain prayer display last November, let me emphasize why we protested and still object: The governor and anyone else who believes in prayer must remain free to pray as much as he wants. The problems come when an elected official, in violation of the Georgia and U.S. constitutions, prays in the name of all the citizens of Georgia.

Some of us also suspect that in this instance the governor was praying on the street corner "that he might be seen of men" (Matthew 6:5-6), especially by Republican presidential candidates who might need a Southern conservative as a running mate.

ED BUCKNER

Buckner is treasurer of the Atlanta Freethought Society in Roswell.

California Home-School Ruling Causes Concern

State appellate court says those who teach children in private must have credentials.

Parents who lack teaching credentials cannot educate their children at home, according to a state appellate court ruling that is sending waves of fear through California's home schooling families.

Advocates for the families vowed to appeal the decision to the state Supreme Court. Enforcement until then appears unlikely, but if the ruling stands, it may be that other states follow in limiting the practice.

"This decision is a direct hit against every home schooler in California," said Brad Dacus, president of the Pacific Justice Institute, which represents the Sunland Christian School, which specializes in religious home schooling. "If the state Supreme Court does not reverse this ... there will be nothing to prevent home-school witch

hunts from being implemented in every corner of the state."

Unlike at least 30 other states, home schooling is not specifically addressed in California law. Under the state education code, students must be enrolled in a public or private school, or can be taught at home by a credentialed tutor.

"Parents do not have a constitutional right to home school their children," wrote Justice H. Walter Croskey in a Feb. 28 opinion signed by the two other members of the district court. "Parents who fail to [comply with school enrollment laws] may be subject to a criminal complaint against them, found guilty of an infraction, and subject to imposition of fines or an order to complete a parent education and counseling program."

Defendant Phillip Long said he believes the ruling stems from hostility against Christians and vowed to appeal to the state Supreme Court.

"I have sincerely held religious beliefs," he said. "Public schools conflict with that. I have to go with what my conscience requires me."

Public schools teach such topics as evolution, which Long said he doesn't believe in. He said his wife spends six hours each day teaching their children reading, writing, math, science, health, physical ed, Bible and social studies.

A. J. Duffy, president of United Teachers of Los Angeles, said he agrees with the ruling. "What's best for a child is to be taught by a credentialed teacher," he said.

[From multiple sources.]

Become a Member!



(Or renew your membership with this form or online at www.AtlantaFreethought.org!)

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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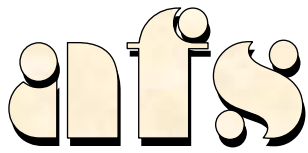
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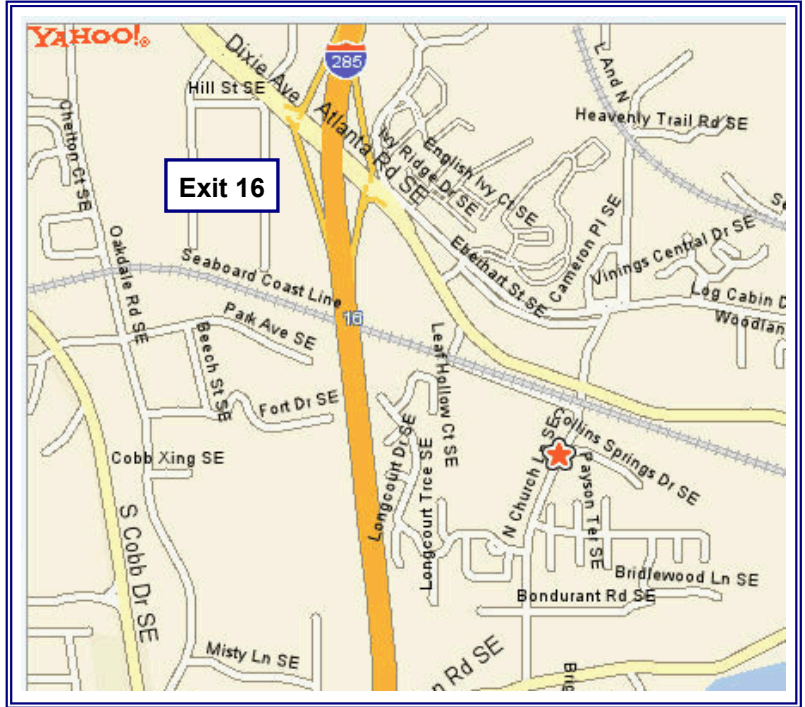


Atlanta
Freethought
Society

**The April 13 Meeting:
1:00 at NEW LOCATION!**

**4775 N. Church Lane SE
Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Robert Boston**



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