

The May AFS Meeting

Panel Discussion on Secularism and Public Schools

At our May 8th meeting, the Atlanta Freethought Society will have a panel discussion led by Mark Banks on Secularism and the Public Schools. A pamphlet by the Freedom From Religion Foundation titled "The Top 10 Public School State/Church Violations And How to Stop Them" will be discussed. (See the brochure here: ffrf.org/images/Top10_Brochure_14x8.5.pdf.) Please be ready to ask questions and take part in the discussion.

In addition, AFS Board Secretary John Carver will give a 10 minute talk on governance, as the board is working on a much-needed overhaul of the bylaws. (John is particularly adept in this field. He is an adjunct professor of nonprofit organizations in the Institute for Nonprofit Organizations at the University of Georgia School of Social Work. John is the creator of the Policy Governance model for board governance. See carter-governance.com/ for details.)

There will be a potluck lunch before John's talk and the panel discussion. If you wish to participate, be sure to check what to bring and plan accordingly. See you there!

According to the Secular Coalition of America (www.secular.org/issues/education_standards), here are four ways children are misled by taxpayer-funded propaganda:

1. In March 2010 the Texas Board of Education voted to remove Thomas Jefferson's name from a list of leaders who have inspired changes in governments worldwide. President Jefferson, who authored the Declaration of Independence, also penned the phrase "separation of church and state."
2. Texas Board of Education member Don McLeroy states, "Evolution is hooey." In 2009 the Texas Board of Education voted to present "all sides" of the evidence when studying evolution and misleadingly requires the consideration of "gaps" in the fossil record.
3. Students taking government classes in Texas are instructed that America's founding was informed by "Judeo-Christian (especially Biblical

Calendar

- 5/7 Game Afternoon 2:00 pm
- 5/8 AFS Potluck 12:00 p.m.
- 5/8 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 5/27 Game Night 7:00 pm
- 6/11 Game Afternoon 2:00 pm
- 6/12 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 am
- 6/12 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm

All events are at AF Hall unless noted and are subject to change.

Be sure to like AFS's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought

law)," and that the legal principles of "Moses"... "informed the American founding documents." In fact, Steven K. Green, director of the Center for Religion, Law and Democracy at Willamette University, said the founders "did not draw on Mosaic law." The Enlightenment, the time which produced our founders, had developed in opposition to reliance on Biblical law. Green's search for late-1700s American court cases that referenced Mosaic law yielded almost nothing: "The record is basically bereft," said Green.

4. In 2009 the Texas State Board of Education removed from curriculum standards reference to the very real scientific consensus that the universe began approximately 14 billion years ago.

The May Potluck

Before the May 8th meeting we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at noon. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

- A-G: Bring a main dish**
- H-P: Bring a dessert**
- Q-Z: Bring a side dish**

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.



Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.



May 8: Panel Discussion on Separation of Church and State in Public Schools

June 12: Maggie Garrett, Legislative Director for Americans United for Separation of Church and State

July 10: Speck Kevin Pratt of Sunday Assembly Atlanta

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoo.com to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to AFSForum-subscribe@yahoo.com. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the [Meetup group](#). The AFS website is www.atlantafreethought.org. To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

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.

Views, opinions, positions or strategies expressed by authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of the Atlanta Freethought Society or any member thereof. The editors of *Atlanta Freethought News* reserve the right to edit or alter in any manner it sees fit any articles deemed to be obscene, offensive, defamatory, threatening, in violation of trademark, copyright or other laws, or is otherwise unacceptable; and also to correct grammar and to conserve space.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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A Huge Triumph for Tennessee's Children

ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/26327-a-huge-triumph-for-tennessee-s-children

The state of Tennessee has just given its children a big victory.

The Tennessee Legislature has repealed a decades-old religious defense for felony crimes against children by parents whose children died or were seriously harmed when prayer took the place of medical assistance.

"The House gave final legislative approval Thursday to a bill repealing a controversial 1994 law that was at the center of a long court fight over the 2002 death of a Loudon County child whose mother refused medical care in favor of 'spiritual treatment' and prayer," the Memphis Commercial Appeal reports. The bill now waits approval from Gov. Bill Haslam, who will almost certainly sign it.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Prince v. Massachusetts* more than 70 years ago that our constitutional "right to practice religion freely does not include liberty to expose the community or child to communicable disease, or the latter to ill health or death." The American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Prevent Child Abuse America, National District Attorneys Association and the National Association of Medical Examiners have all



called for rescinding such religious exceptions, which are far too common in states all over the country. Tennessee should be a guidepost for such other states.

A major player in getting the bill passed was an FFRF ally, Children's Healthcare Is Legal Duty (CHILD). "CHILD believes all parents, regardless of their religious belief, should have a legal duty to obtain medical care for their child when necessary to prevent serious harm," Rita Swan, the organization's president, told the Commercial Appeal.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation also did its bit, sending out an action alert to its members and writing to Tennessee newspapers about the bill.

"The victims here are children, too young to comprehend or consent to a course of action that may drastically increase their chances of death or permanent disfigurement," FFRF Staff Attorney Sam Grover wrote. "Religious freedom ends when a person's actions threaten the health or safety of others. We do not let religious parents beat their children, so why do we let them withhold life-saving treatment?"

FFRF welcomes the repeal of a noxiously harmful religious exemption and thanks its allies and members for their hard work in getting it rescinded.

"Such religious exceptions can—and have—caused great harm to children around the country," says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "We're delighted that reason and common sense have prevailed in at least one state."

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national nontheist organization with 23,700 members all over the country, including almost 300 in Tennessee.

May 2016



LTE: Good Question From Cal Thomas: "Whose Morality?"

Dear Editor:

Cal Thomas ("Whose Morality?," *Marietta Daily Journal*, 13 April 2016), asks a good question. He points out that President Obama seeks a "more ethical and moral outcome," but without specifying a narrow or specific source for the moral standards needed.

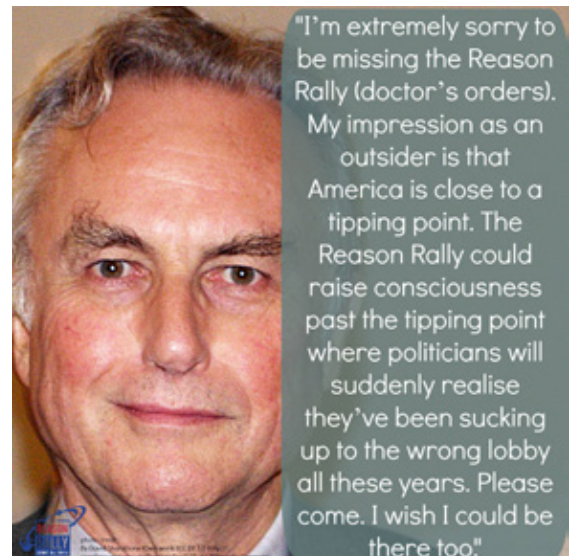
Thomas also points out, "It was once legal to own slaves, but did that law make slavery moral?" He rightly implies with this example that the law is the result of moral standards, not its source. Thomas doesn't mention it, but according to the Bible, both "the Lord," in Leviticus 25:44ff and then Paul, in his New Testament letters, approve of and nowhere condemn slavery as immoral, either.

I agree with Cal Thomas that the law and religion—Christianity and the Bible, for example—are not reliable sources for morality. Therefore we have no choice but to rely on our culturally evolved, imperfect (but getting better) moral senses.

Regards,

Ed Buckner
Smyrna, Georgia

A Statement by Richard Dawkins



"I'm extremely sorry to be missing the Reason Rally (doctor's orders). My impression as an outsider is that America is close to a tipping point. The Reason Rally could raise consciousness past the tipping point where politicians will suddenly realise they've been sucking up to the wrong lobby all these years. Please come. I wish I could be there too."

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Trials And Tribulations: Controversial Ala. Judge Says He Should Stay On The Bench

by Sarah E. Jones in Wall of Separation

www.au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/trials-and-tribulations-controversial-ala-judge-says-he-should-stay-on-the

Alabama's infamous anti-gay, "Ten Commandments" judge seems to think ethics complaints against him are politically motivated and should be dropped.

State Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore has been in hot water thanks to his various attempts to undercut the U.S. Supreme Court's marriage equality decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* last year.

According to *Al.com*, a local news site, Moore claimed again on Wednesday that the U.S. Supreme Court's verdict in *Obergefell* did not alter an Alabama state law banning same-sex marriage and that the complaints therefore had no legal basis.

"This is not about religion," he said. "This is about my marriage and my legal orders."

The complaints were filed against Moore after he ordered the state's probate judges not to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples in open defiance of the high court. He has long maintained the Civil War-era argument that state laws can supersede some U.S. court decisions.

But this week, he bafflingly asserted that he never instructed the state's probate judges to disobey a lower district court or the Supreme Court because his actions were in line with state law – even though that state law was invalidated. He also complained that his legal orders have been "mischaracterized and misstated" by political enemies. Those "enemies" include local transgender activist Ambrosia Starling, whom he singled out for special invective: He called her a "transvestite" with a mental illness.

"We're in a serious time in our country," Moore opined. "We are at a time in our country when people who just a few years ago would have been prescribed a mental illness, a mental disorder."

Starling had filed an ethics complaint against the chief justice and helped other local activists to do the same. They aren't alone: Moore and his attorney, Mat Staver of the anti-gay Liberty Counsel (which also represents embattled Kentucky clerk Kim Davis), said yesterday the justice faces about 30 ethics complaints. Other complaints have been filed by the Human Rights Campaign and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which is based in Alabama.

If these groups and activists succeed, Moore will be removed from the bench — for a second time. The Alabama Court of the Judiciary removed him from his role as chief justice in 2003 after a lengthy battle over his decision to display a five-ton granite carving of the Ten Commandments at his courthouse. Moore was ordered by a federal court to remove the

monument. He refused, so he was removed from his position. But he was not disbarred at the time so he remained eligible to run for chief justice in the future, which he did successfully in 2012.

The ghost of his previous removal was not absent from Wednesday's press conference. Staver claimed bizarrely that the Judiciary Inquiry Commission, which sends ethics complaints to be heard by the Court of the Judiciary, has no jurisdiction over Moore.

Those arguments didn't impress the SPLC. Its president, Richard Cohen, called the justice the "ayatollah of Alabama" in a statement.

"All he's doing, of course, is demonstrating once again why he's unfit to be the chief justice of Alabama," Cohen told the Associated Press.

It's not clear if Moore faces imminent removal



from the bench; the Court of the Judiciary's proceedings are secret until they're concluded. But his decision to call a press conference, inspired by no discernible trigger, does imply he's concerned about his future as an Alabama judge.

And he should be. No matter what he and Staver tell reporters, there's simply no reasonable legal basis to claim that Alabama state law should stand unchanged in total contradiction to a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court. Moore's theocratic priorities are suited to a career in the pulpit, not in the courthouse.

Game Night—aka Sit Around and Tell Your Story Night—Continues!

Atlanta Freethought Society's Game Night, which was started to give us a fun thing for us to do in the winter, seems to be continuing and evolving. We have added a monthly Game Afternoon to the mix on a trial basis, because it is very difficult to negotiate Atlanta traffic on a Friday night. We will meet on Saturday May 7 (the day before our May 8 general meeting) at 2:00 p.m. Bring games, snacks, drinks, and a desire to socialize!



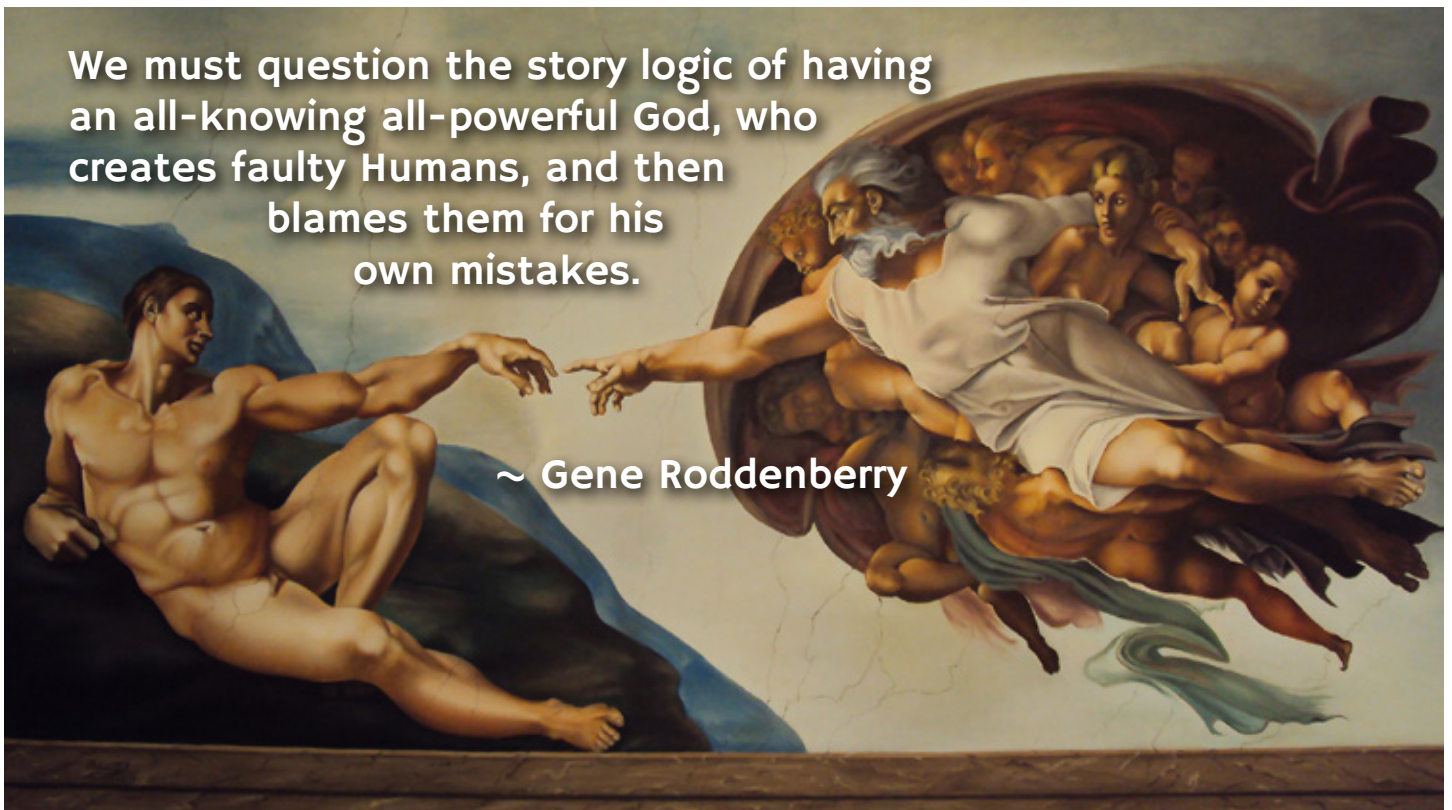
We are continuing the last Friday of the month game night, which will be on May 27 at 7:00 p.m., or whenever you can get here. Again, bring games, snacks, drinks, etc. See you there!

Be sure to RSVP on Meetup so that we can get a headcount and make plans. www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society/

Photos by Laura Ross

We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty Humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes.

~ Gene Roddenberry



Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

The Atlanta Science Tavern no longer meets at Manuel's Tavern as it has closed for renovations for the next few months. However several events are listed—check the meetup page. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern)

The SOS (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnajgore@yahoo.com.

We Agnostics Atlanta meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Galano Club, 585 Dutch Valley Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30324. Clubhouse phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is like an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup has various get-togethers and discussion groups. Several upcoming events. (www.meetup.com/Marietta-Atheists-Meetup/)

The Peachtree City Humanists meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/)

The Southern Crescent Freethinkers sponsor Navigators, Owl & Ibis: A Confluence of Minds, and meet for dinner, etc. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers)

N. Georgia Freethinkers Secularists & Humanists Non-religious freethinking adults who, at times, feel somewhat isolated in this little corner of Georgia to forge friendships, meet for drinks, have dinner parties, chat over coffee, practice debating skills, laugh, hold game nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/North-Gwinnett-Freethinkers-Atheist-Agnostic-Meetup/)

Fellowship of Reason meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM at AF Hall. There are meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. (www.fellowshipofreason.com)

The Georgia chapter of **Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF)** meets on the first Sunday of each month at AF Hall from 2:00 to 4:00. You can learn more about their topics at www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia.

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** on Sunday, May 8, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) has their monthly meeting on Monday, May 9, 7:00 p.m. at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville. The topic is "Losing Our Religion." (www.meetup.com/brights-295/)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on May 14 at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and

resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/)

Atlanta Atheists Parents Meetup will have a play date at Medlock Park, 874 Gaylemont Cir, Decatur near the North Decatur/Embry Hills area Sunday May 15 from 11-2. If the weather is too cold or rainy it will be at Leapin Lizards, 185 Sams St, Decatur, GA 30030. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup)

Third Sunday **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is 2:00 pm, May 15 at Your Pie Perimeter, 123 Perimeter Center West, Atlanta. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/)

Black Nonbelievers will have their general meeting 3:00 p.m. Sun. Apr. 15 at Atlanta Fulton Public Library - Central Branch - 3rd Floor Conference Room, 1 Margaret Mitchell Square, Atlanta, GA. Speaker Nichole Terry will discuss the topic of how belief in deities is strictly evolutionary and has a long history of development over the course hundreds of thousands of years. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general meeting on Sunday May 15 at 6 p.m. at The Phillip Rush Center Meeting Annex, 328 Mell Ave NE, Atlanta (This is their new home location). The topic is "Let It Go" and it features speaker Ron Chapman on forgiveness. Please check out Sunday Assembly's Meetup page. They are an extremely active community with a large number of upcoming events. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/)

Dialog - A Philosophy Discussion Group will meet at 5 Seasons Brewing Company, 000 Marietta street, Atlanta on Friday, May 20 at 7. The topic is Nietzsche vs. the Hollywood Ending. (www.meetup.com/Dialog-A-Philosophy-Discussion-Group-Atlanta-Chapter/)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will have their general meeting on Sat. May 21 3-5 pm at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Drive, Atlanta, GA 30307. Lots more events are available so check out the website (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Atlanta Atheists Parents Meetup will have a play date at East Cobb Park, 3322 Roswell Rd, Marietta, near Marietta and Sandy Springs, Sun. May 22 at 11-2. If the weather is too cold or rainy it will be at Catch Air at Town Center Market, 2505 Chastain Meadows Parkway Northwest, Suite #103, Marietta, GA 30066. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup)

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., May 22 at 4:00 p.m. at Mellow Mushroom Sandy Springs, 6100 Roswell Rd NE. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics - At press time, the only upcoming meetup for Atlanta Skeptics is Drinking Sceptically at 5 Seasons Brewing, Fri., June 3 at 7 pm. Check their meetup page for more info. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics)

Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the get-together. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/)



H/T Banksy

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 \$50 per year.

Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.

Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life membership lasts a lifetime.

Paper newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing and mailing expenses. But if you really want the paper version of the newsletter, just let us know and we will send it to you at no additional charge. (You can also pick up a paper newsletter at any AFS meeting.)

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

Annual dues are:

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AFS Art Display Program

4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

www.atlantafreethought.org afs@atlantafreethought.org

Person or entity displaying art: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Description of artwork (subject, color, dimensions, weight, frame, price, materials, other info — list on separate page if necessary): _____

Display dates: from _____ to _____

Owner if other than above: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$ _____ Upon sale owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee.

Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantafreethought.org). Installation & removal will be done by artist/owner overseen by AFS art committee. Damage to building will be repaired by artist/owner. The owner assumes all risk for artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our possession.

Owner agrees to terms: _____

Signature/date _____

AFS Art Committee approval: _____

Signature/date _____

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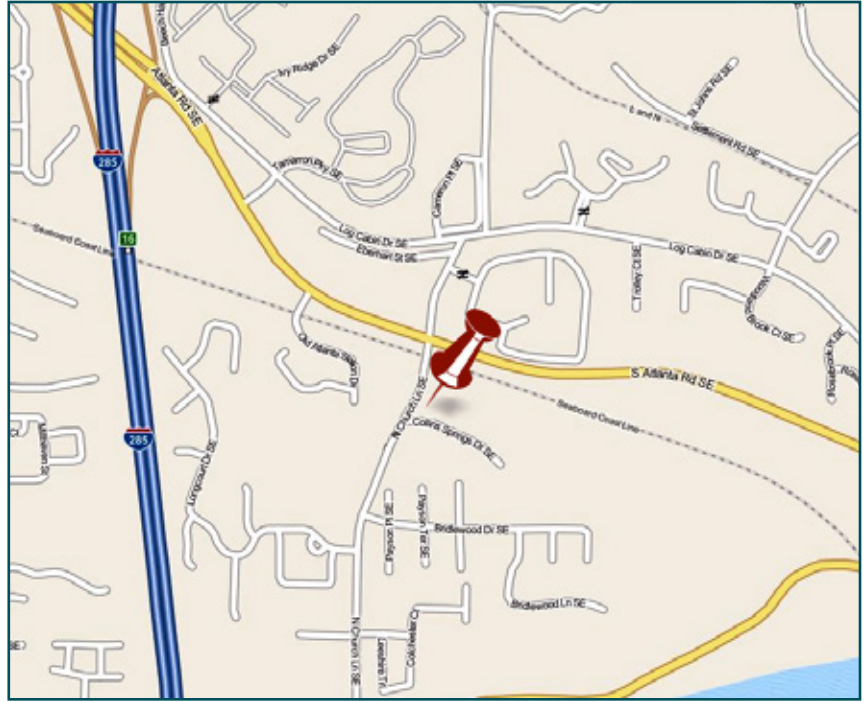
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*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**May 8 meeting
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Panel Discussion on Secularism and the Public Schools



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