

The February AFS Meeting

Bill Osinski on Dwight “Malichi” York

(Rescheduled due to ice storm in January) On Sunday, February 12, Atlanta Freethought Society is fortunate to welcome

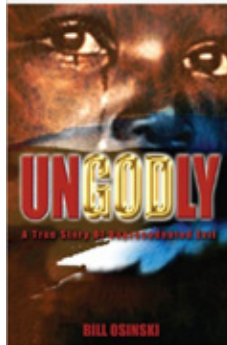


Bill Osinski

investigative writer **Bill Osinski**, who wrote the book *Ungodly* about the tragic story of the Nuwaubians and their cult leader Dwight “Malichi” York, convicted in the largest child molestation case in the USA.

This is the strange, shameful story of how a street kid declared himself a god and was thus granted immunity for a long career of crime.

Dwight York, aka Imam Isa, Dr. Malachi Z. York, and Baba, among others, was so adept at playing the race and religion cards that, for 35 years he successfully trumped a series of politicians, prosecutors, police and school officials, academicians and journalists who might have, or should have, stopped him. So this is also the shameful story of how the fear of being politically incorrect, of being accused of practicing discrimination based on race and religion, silenced the majority and allowed the abuses to continue unabated, while young lives were destroyed.



Calendar

- 2/12 (No board meeting as it was held in Jan)
- 2/12 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm
- 2/24 Games at AF Hall! 7:00-ish pm
- 3/12 Daylight Savings Time-Spring Forward!
- 3/12 Potluck before meeting 12:00 pm
- 3/12 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm
- 3/12 Game afternoon after meeting

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



It's **Black Nonbeliever's Convention at Sea**, taking place aboard the Carnival Sensation, November 25-29, 2017. Get your swimsuits, sunglasses, big brimmed hats and snorkel gear ready—there will also be powerful workshops, networking opportunities and panel discussions, featuring: **Mandisa Thomas • Jeremiah Camara • Sikivu Hutchinson • Bridgett Crutchfield • Lee Moore • Alix Jules • Katina “Kat” Amoah • Rohan Gilkes.**

Prices start at \$750 per person, double occupancy. Includes ship accommodations, and all fees, including for the convention. www.mylanderpages.com/conventionatsea/BN-Convention-at-Sea

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!

meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society

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.



Feb 12: Bill Osinski: *On his book and screenplay about Dwight "Malichi" York, a religious leader who got into legal trouble*

Mar 12: Loren Collins

Apr 9: TBD

May 14: TBD

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.

Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

Editor: Laura Ross
Assistant Editor: Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
4775 N. Church Lane SE,
Atlanta, GA 30339,
phone Laura at 404-634-1005, or send
e-mail to Laura@LauraRossDesign.com

Atlanta Freethought Society President

Laura Ross – 404-825-0258

VP for Internal Communication

Daniel Pyron – 404-695-1907

VP for External Communication

Dwight Lyman – 404-634-1005

Secretary

John Carver – 404-822-6124

Treasurer

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

Board of Directors

Freya Harris – Not available
Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020
Keith Nalumango – 818-856-9677
Mark Banks – 770-354-1546
Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486
Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

Atlanta Freethought News

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Send E-mail to
afs@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Wordpress specialist: Dwight Lyman
AFS Facebook page: Laura Ross

Flirting with fascism in Trump's America

by John Bruce Carver in John Just Thinking

johnjustthinking.com

President **Donald Trump's** victorious campaign was remarkable for both inciting Americans' incivility and fears and for exploiting them. Over the past months, the most troubling of the fears associated with President Trump is his proto-despot personality and his growing list of actions appallingly similar to foreign fascists. To me, these exceed all other concerns about his presidency. Will time prove so drastic an alarm unwarranted? Perhaps. But my being wrong offers little comfort. Let me explain. But first, let me point out the special gravity of my thesis.

My alarm in this post is not a typical partisan criticism, for though I have a number of these like anyone else, none of them rise to the level that concerns me here. The apprehension leading to this post is of a different sort, more a *fear for the nature of the republic* than about single decisions or circumstances within the operation of a republic. My point is much, much bigger than oil pipelines, crowd size, careless emails, egregiously small-minded tweets, or even healthcare insurance. I have described the personal characteristics that make Trump the worst presidential choice that voters have been presented with in decades, but just replaying those inadequacies is also not my point. *Risking fascism is.*

On December 12, I published a post titled "What does a proto-despot look like?" I warned that, though Trump might not turn out to be an active despot, "the signals [he] radiates on an almost daily basis are too frightening to ignore [and] too reminiscent of historical lessons we'd be foolish not to note." I added that he "may yet become worthy of [the presidency], but meanwhile wariness of handing the [White House] keys" to a paranoid, thin-skinned, fact-averse man is a debt we all owe to the republic.

Only a complete Trump sycophant could disregard the account of **Melik Kaylan's** January 10 *Forbes* article, "What the Trump Era Will Feel Like: Clues From Populist Regimes Around The World". Within 24 hours of inauguration, Trump's despotic tendencies had already been displayed.

Mr. Kaylan began thusly: "I have now covered upwards of a dozen countries that have buckled under the emergent wave of populist leaders, from the Far East to the Mideast to Europe and the Americas. Many of the countries have done so quite democratically, at first. That emergent wave has crashed onto US shores in a fashion thoroughly precedented [sic] abroad. Recently, I wrote about how I'd seen all the tricks in the Trump campaign before, actually in Tbilisi, Georgia, during the 2012 national elections when the pro-US candidate lost to a pro-Russian populist. At that time, no one was ready to believe the Russians capable of influencing Western style elections. Many still don't, even after Trump. We now have enough experience of populists in power in the West and elsewhere to guess intelligently at what's to come in the US; what life will feel like under Trump. Here is a checklist to compare against in the coming months and years. We will all be happier if none of this comes to pass but the weight of evidence suggests the

worst. Equally, none of this implies that supporters of Trump don't have legitimate issues on their side which, sadly, other politicians won't address. Which is how populists come to power."

Kaylan's list is enlightening. With them as backdrop, he considers Trump's actions and statements, the fights he has stimulated, and the remedies he's proposed. These are familiar, for we have all watched them unfold on the nightly news. They bear a frightening similarity with the sequence of lies, denials, immature behaviors, reversals, delegitimizing of all other sources of information, and other bizarre actions with which fascist "strong men" have arisen. I have spoken of Trump's having the personality of a "proto despot," but Kaylan's broader experience enables the case to be made more convincingly.

Can I be wrong? Of course. Do I want to be wrong? Absolutely. Freedom is too important to sacrifice to win a point. But as claimed in my first paragraph, my being wrong offers little comfort, for even a partial fascist deterioration is enough to justify being always on guard. We should be doing that anyway, but particularly with a president who takes little care to avoid showing symptoms of fascism. (A man waving a gun in a crowd must be treated

by police as if he'd already fired it.) A president's negligently frightening the populace by actions increasingly indistinct from fascism is itself a massively irresponsible act, for fascism is not identified with certainty until it is too late to go back.

(Does any of this warning delegitimize Trump's election? I don't think so. Regardless how many troublesome circumstances unduly influenced voters, it was still voters who pulled the levers. Voters are ultimately accountable for their votes regardless of who tried to influence them.)

About sixty million voters—heedlessly, in my opinion, since Trump's shallowness, despotic attitude, and untrustworthiness were on display all along—opted for the United States of America to have a president whose behavior is consonant with that of emerging fascists.

Consequently, it is no longer unthinkable that the United States might drift (or lurch) toward becoming a fascist state.



Lifting ban on church politicking would undermine our secular republic

ffrf.org

The new political setup in Washington, D.C., is hell-bent on converting religious institutions into campaign halls.

The Johnson Amendment bars churches or other 501(c)(3) tax-exempt groups from endorsing or opposing political candidates. It is essential for keeping the foundations of our secular republic intact, but the Trump administration and Congress are going after it with all their might.

At the National Prayer Breakfast on Feb. 2, President Trump vowed: “I will get rid of and totally destroy the Johnson Amendment.” In doing so, he repeated a pledge that he has made several times in the past.

In tandem, top GOP lawmakers, including House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, introduced a bill the same day to comply with his wishes. “It would allow churches and other nonprofits that have tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code to speak out about candidates as long as the political activity is made during the course of the organizations’ regular activities and does not have a large cost,” *The Hill* reports. Another recent bill, introduced the beginning of January, also aims to “restore the free speech and First Amendment rights of churches and exempt organizations by repealing the 1954 Johnson Amendment.”

Coupled with this flurry of legislative activity is yet another ominous development.



A portion of a leaked presidential executive order draft that *The Nation* obtained also seeks to halt all enforcement of the Johnson Amendment.

Why does all this matter so much?

Named for Lyndon

B. Johnson, who sponsored the bill as senator, the Johnson Amendment prohibits tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) groups, including churches, from engaging in partisan, political activities. Thus it safeguards U.S. democracy by ensuring that tax-exempt money (which is essentially subsidized by taxpayers) is not used for political purposes.

Religion and politics are a dangerous mix. **James Madison** wrote, “to employ religion as an engine of civil policy” is “an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation.”

Without the Johnson Amendment, official church doctrine could include which candidate congregants must vote for. The most pernicious aspect of church-politicking is the power which religious leaders hold over the mind of the individual. Willing churchgoers could be excommunicated for failing to adhere to church voting doctrine or, far worse, a congregant might believe they will suffer eternal torture if they vote for the “wrong” candidate.

The pressure churches would be able to exert — spiritual blackmail would not be an inappropriate term here — would forever alter our political

system. Elections would cease to be about ideas and become pandering to churches for souls/ votes.

Any church is free to make a choice whether to remain tax-exempt or to decide to forfeit this privilege in order to engage in politics. This prevents the IRS from enforcing that rule. Unlike other 501(c)(3)s, churches do not have to file tax returns with the IRS. Other tax-exempt (c)(3)s must track every dime that comes in and goes out. You can usually find their Form 990 tax returns online. But churches are financial black holes.

So, with the repeal of the ban on church politicking, you have a quick recipe for churches to absorb millions, possibly billions, for political campaigns, which they can spend on anything they want. This is not about free speech, it’s about tax-subsidized political power. Pastors can already endorse, just not from the pulpit using the aegis of their church or tax-free money.

FFRF is heavily invested in the current law — and in keeping it intact. For decades, FFRF has been working to ensure enforcement. Since 2006, FFRF has asked the IRS for investigations into 70 situations in which we believe the tax code was violated. Our complaints to the IRS are filed without regard to political affiliation or allegiance. FFRF sent a letter to the IRS regarding a pastor at a church in North Carolina who urged his congregation during worship services to vote for **President Obama**. And last year, FFRF sent the IRS letters about **Hillary Clinton** campaigning at churches that endorsed her during services.

In 2012, FFRF even sued the IRS to compel it to enforce its own regulations barring churches as well as other (c)(3)s from engaging in partisan political activity. We’re proud our lawsuit nudged the IRS to agree to continue to investigate errant churches and ensure that the tax code is being enforced evenhandedly.

The Johnson Amendment isn’t a threat to our democracy. But allowing tax-exempt churches to engage in political campaigning would be. It would open the door to further unregulated money in our politics with zero accountability. Because of their lack of accountability, were tax-exempt churches allowed to engage in electioneering, they could essentially turn into money-laundering operations for political candidates. The result would make the *Citizens United* fallout look like child’s play. Our secular republic would be at stake.

Leaked “religious freedom” exec order draft reveals alarming attack on civil rights

ffrf.org

A leaked presidential executive order draft that the Trump administration is floating reveals a sweeping and alarming agenda to permit discrimination, dismantle the Civil Rights Act and other protections in the name of “religious freedom.”

The proposed “Executive Order Establishing a Government-wide Initiative to Respect Religious Freedom” would authorize special privileges and legal exemptions to religionists, particularly benefiting the Religious Right.



If Trump issues this executive order, he would be fulfilling virtually every item on the Religious Right’s wish list.

In summary, the proposal, if adopted, would allow any governmental agency or private corporation citing a religious objection to discriminate against certain classes of citizens, such as LGBTQ or

women seeking contraception. It would allow the type of discrimination that got Kim Davis removed from her governmental position in Kentucky.

The order very clearly violates the clause of the First Amendment that FFRF works to protect every day: the Establishment Clause. At its core, this proposal would privilege religion — and though it never mentions it by name, Christianity. Trump would give the Religious Right a blanket exemption to every rule it doesn’t like and allow it to impose its discriminatory and often cruel morality on others. Put simply, this grants believers a license to break laws that conflict with their religion.

Nearly 150 years ago, in an 1878 ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court pointed out that while the right to believe is absolute, the right to act on those beliefs is not. The court then posed this easy hypothetical: “Suppose one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship, would it be seriously contended that the civil government under which he lived could not interfere to prevent a sacrifice?” Under Trump’s executive order, this hypothetical would no longer be easy to answer.

However, President Trump can’t change laws (he’s not the legislative branch) and he can’t change administrative or agency rules without following the lengthy rule-making process laid out in federal law. So instead, Trump, were he to sign this

proposal, would be telling the agencies and personnel under his control that they cannot enforce the rules that he doesn’t like.

Because this executive order favors religion over nonreligion and because it grants religion a license to violate any law that clashes with its mentality, it is unconstitutional. FFRF will fight it.

For a section-by-section summary of Trump’s proposed executive order, and a description of how each provision would eviscerate civil rights and other protections for minorities — all in the name of “religious freedom” — go here: (ffrf.org/component/k2/item/28599-section-by-section-summary-of-trump-s-proposed-executive-order)

How would this executive order work?

Executive orders are meant to implement federal law, but can run into legal problems when they seek to change the law, rather than implement it. That’s what conservatives have been arguing for eight years under President Obama. Texas and 25 other states even sued Obama for his executive order on immigration. The Supreme Court added an issue for review to that case (an extraordinary step) to examine whether the president violated his constitutional duty to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed.” (Article II, Section 3) The arguments briefed in that case, especially by some of the key players on the Religious Right, present some problems for Trump’s order.

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

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

Post-Christian Church of SHATTER meets every Sunday at 5:00 pm at 1371 Hartvord Ave SW, Atlanta. This is a new group so check out the website to find out what to expect and be sure to RSVP: www.churchofshatter.com/sunday-service (www.meetup.com/Post-Christian-Church-of-SHATTER)

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

The Peachtree City Humanists will have a Darwin Day celebration on Saturday, Feb 11, at 2:00PM at the Peachtree City Library. Dr. Bethany Turner, Associate Professor of Anthropology at GSU, will speak. (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 Free-thinkers Secularists & Humanists Non-re-

ligious 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)

The Atlanta Science Tavern has several meetings planned. Please check meetup page for more information. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on Sat, Feb 11 at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Book-sellers 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)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun., Feb 12 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) meets on the Mon Feb 13 at 7:00 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, unless otherwise indicated. The topic is "The Crazy Stuff We Believe(d)". Check Facebook/Meetup pages for more information. (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general meeting on Sun Feb 19 at 6 p.m. at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta.

Assemblies, and the potlucks afterward, are open to the public and free to attend! They are an extremely active community with a large number of upcoming events including rock chorus,

secular support, mindfulness meditation, wonder club, urban wonder, book club, makers night out, volunteering, queer beyond belief group, public speaking series, trivia nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Atlanta Astronomy Club is having a general meeting Sat, Feb 18, 3-5 at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Feb 26 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Sceptically" on the

first Friday of each month. 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (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)

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)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia sometimes meets on the first Sunday of every month at 2:00 at AF Hall or at a restaurant. Not every month—please check Meetup or Facebook. (www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)



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!

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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: _____

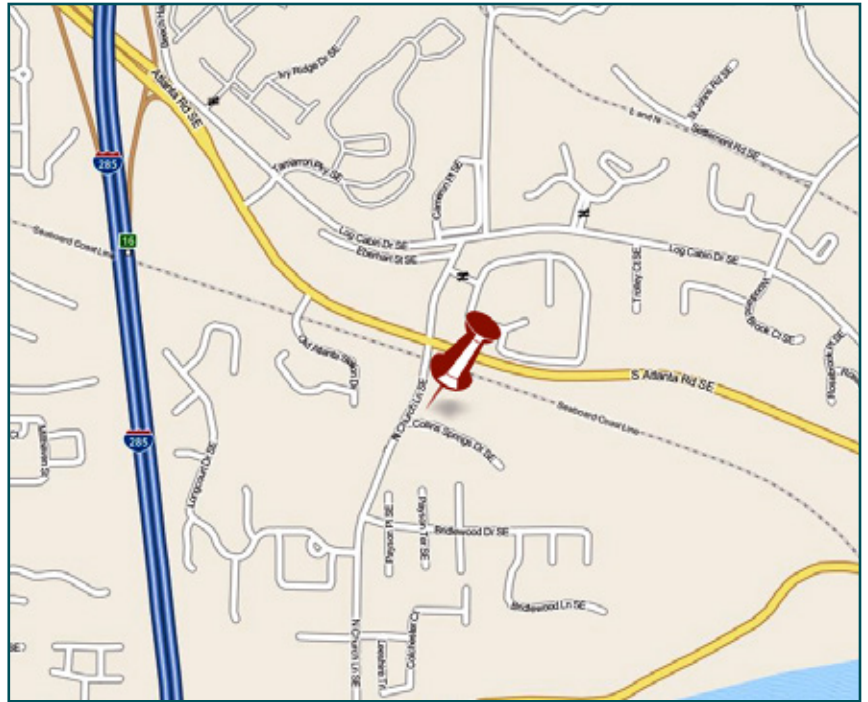
Signature/date _____

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**February 12th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Bill Osinski



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