

Number 7 - July 2017 **AFS Publication - Volume 23** An A

The July AFS Meeting Summer Cookout Party!

In lieu of a General Meeting this Sunday, **AFS is having a Summer Cookout Party starting** at noon. In case of inclement weather, we will eat indoors.

There will be fun, food, and games.

AFS will provide food and beverages but you are encouraged to bring dishes and games to share.



Calendar

- 7/9 Summer Cookout! Starting at Noon (No General Meeting)
- 8/13 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 a.m.
- 8/13 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
 - 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

A Colo. Case Gives **SCOTUS An Opportunity To Say That Businesses Can't Use Religion As An Excuse To Discriminate**

By Liz Hayes • Wall of Separation

www.au.org

June 26 was the two-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, the landmark case in which the high court recognized the rights of same-sex couples to marry. The Supreme Court chose that anniversary to announce it will review Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, the case of a Colorado baker who refused to provide a wedding cake to a same-sex couple.

We hope the court will reach the same conclusion in Masterpiece as the lower courts: a business cannot use religion as an excuse to discriminate.

"The owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop can't treat some people like second-class citizens because of his religion," said Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "With the eyes of the nation and history watching, the Supreme Court now has the opportunity to join lower

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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.

July 9: Summer Cookout Party Aug 13: TBD Sept 10: TBD Oct 8: 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@yahoogroups.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@yahoogroups.com**. The AFS Facebook page is at **facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought**. For calender 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 nonreligion. 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. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person, \$20 for low income.

Membership includes AFNews by email or mail. (Tell us which one you want.)

> Sustaining Membership is \$100. Life Membership is \$1000. Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

Please make checks and money orders payable to Atlanta Freethought Society

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Visit our Meetup page at meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

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Atlanta Freethought News

American Atheists 'Profoundly Disappointed' by Supreme Court's Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer Decision

www.atheists.org



Washington, DC—In a 7-2 decision on June 26th, the United States Supreme Court ruled that churches and other houses of worship are entitled to state funding, undermining the foundation of the wall of separation between religion and government.

In Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer, the Court decided that the Missouri State Constitution's noaid clause was an unconstitutional burden on the church's free exercise rights.

David Silverman, president of American Atheists, made the following statement:

"By striking down Missouri's no-aid clause, the Court has opened Pandora's Box. This case was about more than a playground. It was about whether unaccountable religious groups are entitled to receive taxpayer funding despite their complete lack of financial transparency. For the first time, this Court has decided that they are.

"Without the protection of these no-aid clauses, taxpayers are now being forced to directly subsidize religious denominations they do not support. That is fundamentally un-American and I am profoundly disappointed that the Court continues to erode the wall of separation between religion and government.

"We will continue to remain vigilant against any further attempts to direct taxpayer funding to churches and other houses of worship. Taken with the ongoing attempts to repeal the Johnson Amendment and turn churches into Super PACs, this decision represents a clear and profound threat to our democracy. We must demand full and equal accountability and transparency of all groups receiving tax-exempt status, including houses of worship."

Atheists Warn Kentucky Schools About Potentially Unconstitutional Bible Classes

www.atheists.org

Frankfort, KY—American Atheists today sent a letter to the Kentucky Commissioner of Education reminding him of the state's obligations under the U.S. Constitution to discuss religion only in an academic context despite the recently enacted "Religious Literacy Law" which allows the teaching of religion and the use of the Bible as an instructive tool in Kentucky public schools.

"Passing a law allowing the Bible to be used in schools doesn't change the fact that public schools can't advance any particular religion in classrooms," said **Geoffrey T. Blackwell**, staff attorney for American Atheists. "Creating an elective course that caters only to Christian students would do just that."

"We are closely monitoring Kentucky's schools to ensure compliance with the state's Constitutional obligations and to protect the rights of students," Blackwell added.

Governor Matt Bevin, shown below, signed HB 128, which went into effect on Thursday, June 29. The law requires the state Board of Education to develop courses that teach "Biblical content, characters, poetry, and narratives" that the state claims are "prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture." No other religious texts or religion is mentioned in the statute.

"This law is yet another attempt to promote Christianity by elevating it above all others in Kentucky's schools," said **Jen Scott**, American Atheists' Kentucky State Director and a board member for Tri-State Freethinkers, a local atheist activist group.

The letter urges the state to create a comparative religion course that educates students about the diverse beliefs of their fellow Kentuckians and others around the world rather than an unconstitutional attempt to indoctrinate children into Christianity.

TRI-STATE FREETHINKERS is a social, academic, and activist group with over 2,100 members in Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. They are advocates for equal rights and the separation of church and state. They empower members to make positive change by giving back to the community.

AMERICAN ATHEISTS is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that defends civil rights for atheists, freethinkers, and other nonbelievers; works for the total separation of religion and government; and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy. American Atheists was founded in 1963 by Madalyn Murray O'Hair.



Congress Stealthily Permitting Church Electioneering

ffrf.org

Congress is engaging in cloak-and-dagger tactics to thwart public opinion with a sneaky attempt to undermine a more than 60-year-old prohibition on church electioneering.

Nearly 4,500 nonprofits signed a joint letter to Congress in opposing repeal of the Johnson Amendment, a move that would be disastrous for the nonprofit sector and for campaign finance. A repeal is so widely unpopular that fully 79 percent of Americans oppose pastors endorsing candidates from the pulpit.

But rather than go along with the public consensus, House Republicans have now tried to hamstring the Johnson Amendment through a provision buried 116 sections deep in the House Financial Services appropriations bill. The provision reads: "None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Internal Revenue Service to make a determination that a church, an integrated auxiliary of a church, or a convention or association of churches is not exempt from taxation for participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office unless" and is followed by a series of restrictions meant to

ensure that no church is ever penalized for violating the law. Specifically, the Commissioner of Internal Revenue must personally consent to enforcement, must notify Congress of the IRS' intent to enforce the law, and must then wait 90 days before making a determination against the church.



Note that these additional protections against enforcement are only contemplated for churches and associations

of churches, but not for other nonprofits, who are equally bound by the Johnson Amendment. The result is unequal treatment under the law — a preferential boon to churches in violation of the Constitution's separation between religion and government.

In May, FFRF testified before Congress on the dire implications of scuttling the Johnson Amendment.

"In short, overturning the Johnson Amendment would make the Citizens United decision look trivial and nominal," it said. "If the Johnson Amendment is repealed, millions, possibly billions, will inevitably flow into and out of churches for political purposes."

The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a legal challenge in May against **President Trump's** "religious liberty" executive order. The order and Trump's repeated statements clearly communicated to churches that they can now endorse political candidates from the pulpit, hence undercutting the Johnson Amendment via the executive branch. Congress is now intent on the same result legislatively.

Defunding enforcement is no different than overturning it, and FFRF condemns any attempt to give churches special treatment.

"Theocrat-loving members of Congress are surreptitiously trying to chip away at the wall of separation," says FFRF Co-President **Annie Laurie Gaylor.** "But we will not allow them to get away with this."

Trump Still Trying to Ban As Many Muslims As Possible

By Andrew Nellis • Wall of Separation

www.au.org

The Trump administration released guidance on June 29 on how it will implement the Muslim ban going forward – and it's ugly.

As we wrote **on June 28**, the Supreme Court on Monday said that the Trump administration could proceed with its Muslim ban while awaiting the court's review, but only against people who have no "credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States." The Supreme Court used that broad language to try to ensure that the implementation of the ban would "not burden any American party."

The Supreme Court gave a few examples of what would constitute a "bona fide relationship." For example, the court said that the ban can't currently be applied to people with a "close familial relationship" to someone in the United States. The court specified that that "clearly" would include the mother-in-law of someone in the United States. Yet the Trump administration announced yesterday evening that grandparents and grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, brothers- and sisters-in-law, and cousins all would not count – those individuals would all be banned.

Not only is the government's policy pointlessly cruel, it's also clearly inconsistent with the Supreme Court's order. The court particularly mentioned mothers-in-law because one of the plaintiffs in *Trump v. Hawaii* is suing so that his mother-in-law can visit him in Hawaii.

Mother-in-law jokes aside, it's impossible to reconcile the Supreme Court's recognition that the relationship between a son-in-law and a mother-in-law is "clearly" "close" with the Trump administration's view that the relationship between a brother-in-law and a sister-in-law is *not* "close." Nor is there any reason to think it more of a burden to be separated from your mother-inlaw than to be separated from your grandmother or your aunt. At most family events in America, like a wedding or funeral or graduation ceremony or birthday party, all these relations might be expected to attend. But under the Trump administration's policy, all would now be barred.

In short, because the Supreme Court didn't enumerate every single type of close familial relationship, the Trump administration is trying to keep

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courts in affirming that religious freedom does not grant a business owner license to harm others."

In 2012, the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood refused to bake a wedding cake for **Charlie Craig** and **David Mullins**. The couple filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, which found that the baker had violated a Colorado law that prohibits businesses from discriminating against customers based on their sexual orientation.

The bakery appealed that decision to the Colorado Court of Appeals, and Americans United filed a friend-of-the-court **brief** with that court. We argued that the First Amendment does not excuse businesses from their obligation to treat all customers equally – even when the desire to discriminate is motivated by religion.

"Antidiscrimination statutes like Colorado's do not burden or restrain business owners' symbolic

speech," AU wrote in the brief. "Neither the act of accepting or turning away customers, nor furnishing baked goods and other similar products to customers, is the kind of activity deemed worthy of symbolic-speech protection under existing First Amendment doctrine."

The court of appeals agreed with us and, in August 2015, affirmed the Commission's finding. After the Colorado Supreme Court declined to hear the case, the bakery appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The justices deliberated on whether to review the Masterpiece case for an extended period of time, leading to speculation that newly appointed Justice Neil Gorsuch could have provided the fourth vote needed for review.

Now that the high court has agreed to hear the case, it should make it clear that no claim to religious freedom can override anti-discrimination laws.

"Religious freedom – the right to believe or not as you see fit – is a fundamental American value. And finding a partner to love and to marry is a fundamental part of the American dream for many. Our country's laws should provide everyone with access to both," said Lynn.



Americans United made a similar argument in State of Washington v. Arlene's Flowers, in which a florist refused to sell flowers to a same-sex couple. In February, the Washington Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the florist could not use religion to justify discrimination.

Like the Colorado bakery, the Washington florist had tried to justify her discriminatory practices by calling her work "expressive conduct" – in other words, nonverbal communication protected by the First Amendment.

But the courts in both Colorado and Washington rightly rejected this argument. In the Washington case, the court cited AU's brief in dismissing the idea that discrimination laws don't apply to businesses providing an "artistic" service. Such an arrangement, the court noted, would create an unworkable "two-tiered system" in which a "dime-store lunch counter would be required to serve interracial couples but an upscale bistro could turn them away."

The Arlene's Flowers case will likely be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court as well. With several related cases filtering through the court system around the country, the high court should now definitively declare that businesses can't use religion as an excuse to discriminate.

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American Muslims' grandparents, grandkids, aunts, uncles, and more out of the country.

Although it's no surprise from this administration, it's nevertheless disappointing to see that Trump and his team are still trying to ban as many Muslims as they think they can get away with.

To recap: The first iteration of the Muslim ban applied even to legal permanent residents of the United States. In the face of widespread public outrage, the administration **retreated** from that position. But the Muslim ban was still unconstitutional, and multiple federal courts **blocked** it. So Trump again retreated slightly – watering it down, in his words. But the second executive order was still a Muslim ban – and still unconstitutional – and multiple federal courts **blocked** it, too.

Now, once again, Trump is gratuitously overstepping his legal authority in his relentless quest to keep as many Muslims out as he possibly can. It won't work. The plaintiffs in *Hawaii* have already **pointed out** the illegality of the administration's implementation of the ban, and the government has once again begun to back down: The guidance, which originally blocked Americans' fiancé(e)s from the six targeted countries, has been **revised** to confirm that an engagement is a bona fide relationship. And the government has also retracted a statement from yesterday that refugees who were already sponsored by resettlement agencies in the United States would be banned despite that relationship.

Let's be perfectly clear. The Muslim ban is unconstitutional, and it cannot stand. We fully expect the Supreme Court to agree with us on this come October. But whether such a pronouncement from the high court will finally put an end to Trump's efforts to discriminate against Muslims is another question altogether.

No matter how long the Trump administration pursues its hateful policies, we will continue to stand with the American Muslim community. For discrimination against any religion jeopardizes the religious liberty that all Americans enjoy. Read more about our efforts to fight Trump's un-American Muslim ban here.

July 2017

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 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.

Gainesville Atheists are now having weekly meetups on Sundays at 3:00 p.m. at Lake Lanier Club Business Center, 2350 Avonlea Way, Gainesville to discuss the historicity of Jesus. They are also doing outreach to University of North Georgia - Gainesville. (www.meetup.com/ Secular-Atheist-Study-the-Scriptures-SASS-Gainesville)

Post-Christian Church of SHATTER meets every Sunday at 5:00 pm at 1371 Hartford 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 participate in social and educational

activities such as dinners, lunches, coffees, outdoor recreation, discussion groups, and book clubs with topics that include science, psychology, philosophy. (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, meet for drinks, to forge friendships, have dinner parties, chat over coffee, practice debating skills, laugh, hold game nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/ North-Gwinnett-Freethinkers-Atheist-Agnostic-Meetup)

Atlanta Astronomy Club is not having meetings during the summer months. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Geor-

gia does not have any events planned at press time so please check Meetup or Facebook. (www.meetup.com/ Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)

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, Jul 8 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)

There will be a meetup for Atlanta Atheists Sun., Jul 9 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)

had a summer party on July 4 at a member's house. To find out about future meetings, go to the Meetup page. (www.meetup. com/brights-295)

Atlanta Atheists will have a third Sunday meetup at The Brass Tap, 4505 Ashford Dunwoody Rd., Atlanta on Sun, Jun 16 at 2:00. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Black Nonbelievers is having a general meeting Sun, Jul 16, 3 pm at Little Five Points Community Center, 1083 Austin Ave

> NE, Atlanta. The topic is the new BN Changes Lives campaign. Share how BN has helped with your transition out of religion, and if BN has been instrumental to your personal growth and finding connections with fellow nonbelievers. (www.meetup.com/ Black-Nonbelievers/)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta TANKS UP ON FOSSIL FUELS ON THE will have a Summer Celebration on Sun Jul 16 from 5-7:30 p.m. at First

Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta (Note earlier start time). In place of the Assembly this month there will be a community celebration with music, food, games and fun! All are welcome. SAA is 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)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta is meeting Sun, Jul 23 12:30-2:00 p.m. at Manuel's Tavern, 603 N Highland Ave NE, Atlanta to have a conversation on ethical living. They meet every 4th Sunday. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Another meetup for Atlanta Atheists is scheduled for Sun., Jul 23 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Skeptically" 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)

TELLS CHILDREN THE EARTH IS ONLY 6,000 YEARS OLD





WAY HOME

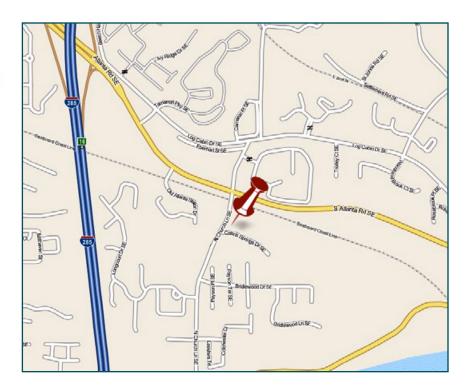
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artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our posession. Owner agrees to terms: Signature/date	Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantaf- reethought.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	 Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$ Upon sale owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee. 		Address:	Display dates: from to to		w Pers Addi Phor Ema Desc price	4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

July 9th meeting 12:00 at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

Summer Cookout!

Dare To Think

For Yourself!



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