

## Kathleen Johnson - "The 'Science' of Forensic Science" (via Zoom)

AFS will continue its string of stimulating, entertaining, and educational Zoom meetings, and despite the pandemic, we're really happy in some ways to not be meeting in person, because it means we can have national experts from the Hill Country of Texas like Kathleen Johnson speak with us so easily. Fans of "Crime Scene Investigators" TV shows depicting how readily police lab analyses prove who the evildoers are may be disappointed—but they'll also learn how much more interesting reality is, even while the need for skepticism is reinforced. Johnson also suggested that a change to a more pro-science national administration can affect all this.



**Kathleen Johnson**

Are everyone's fingerprints really unique? Does DNA provide proof? What if three eyewitnesses actually saw and agree on a murder—no ambiguity possible, right? What is it like to actually process a crime scene?

Kathleen Johnson, currently a national board member for American Atheists, has served American Atheists as an activist since 1997. She previously held the position of Military Director for American Atheists, a position she helped create to help American Atheists better serve and assist the military population and engage in military-related activism.

Professor Kathleen Johnson is an expert forensic consultant and professor in Investigative Forensics at University of Maryland Global Campus. Prof. Johnson is a retired Special Agent with the U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Command who specialized in evidence collection and management, crime scene processing, and emergency scene management. She served more than 22 years on active duty with the Army, retiring in 2008 at the rank of First Sergeant, and continues to serve the Army as a civilian employee. During her service, she served in several active combat zones

### Calendar

June 13	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
July 11	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Aug 8	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm

All events are via Zoom unless noted and are subject to change.

including Iraq and Afghanistan. Also while on active duty, she earned a master's degree in Forensic Science from the University of Florida as well as a master's degree in Administration from Central Michigan University.

Johnson was raised Christian but knew from a very young age that she was an atheist. She recalls attending bible school, where she attempted several times to be "saved," but gave up because it "wouldn't take." After many years of service, she joined American Atheists after experiencing religious discrimination and harassment at the hands of a commander. Immediately after joining American Atheists, she searched for a military-related activist group and—finding none—she founded the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers and served at its first president until 2001 when she stepped down to become American Atheists' first military director.

Johnson's activism has included appearances on Fox News and extensive quotes in news articles in Newsweek, AlterNet, Huffington Post, and other media outlets. She organized a rally on the steps of the Texas state capitol to protest the removal of Thomas Jefferson from social studies texts.

Please click on the link below to participate. Socializing starts at 12:30 pm.

**AFS June Meeting**  
**June 13, 2021 1:00-2:30 PM (EDT)**

To join Zoom meeting go to this link:  
[us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911)



**For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!**  
**[meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](https://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 presented online due to global pandemic (see link on page 1). Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:30 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.



**June 13: Kathleen Johnson**

**July 11: TBD**

**August 8: Kenneth Copp**

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*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. 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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## Florida governor signs trans athlete ban in religious photo-op

Freedom From Religion Foundation



The Freedom From Religion Foundation condemns Florida Gov. **Ron DeSantis** not only for **signing into law** a discriminatory bill to ban transgender girls from school sports, but for making it a religious photo-op.

DeSantis made a show of signing the bill at Trinity Christian Academy, a private Christian school, even though the new law will only apply to public schools, betraying his religious motivation. The school DeSantis chose for his photo-op has a **long-winded Statement of Faith** that is thoroughly anti-LGBTQ and anti-science. “We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, tran-sexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God’s gift of sex,” the statement includes. Signing a transgender athlete ban at this school sends a clear message that the bill is not about protecting women’s sports, but rather is about advancing a particular religious belief that everyone should be heterosexual, cisgender and Christian.

To emphasize the cruelty of the new measure, DeSantis selected the first day of Pride Month to sign the anti-trans bill into law. (FFRF’s Strategic Response Attorney Ryan D. Jayne has **written extensively** about bills just like this and why they are misguided.)

Ironically, at the signing ceremony DeSantis stated, “We’re gonna go based on biology, not based on ideology when we’re doing sports.” However, the bill is not only motivated by an anti-trans ideology, but also was signed at a school that rejects biology and explicitly states: “We deny any form of atheistic or theistic evolution.” The school’s anti-science beliefs go even further, asserting that “the Genesis account of creation is to be accepted literally and not allegorically or figuratively; that the creation was accomplished in six (6), twenty-four (24) hour days.”

The school’s Statement of Faith also includes a belief that Armageddon is coming “at any moment,” that those who do not agree with the church are “wicked and under the curse,” and that Satan is “the malignant prince of the power of the air and the unholy god of this world” and “the author of all false religions.” It even says that church members should not sue one another, or the church, in civil courts; instead, they should trust the church itself to resolve such issues.

By signing anti-trans legislation into law at this anti-LGBTQ institution, DeSantis signals not only his anti-trans bigotry, but his approval for all of these abhorrent and unscientific beliefs. Floridians deserve a secular, evidence-based government that works to advance science rather than discrimination, and that works to protect all Floridians rather than advancing a divisive religious mission.

## June a month for LGBTQ+ pride and great concern

Freedom From Religion Foundation

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, nearly 12 percent of whose members identify as LGBTQ+, celebrates Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Pride Month with the knowledge that even though there’s been much improvement, **much is at stake.**

As **President Biden’s** Pride Month **proclamation** points out, there has indeed been “remarkable progress since Stonewall,” the uprising in June 1969 that sparked the gay liberation movement in the United States. That includes the fact that nearly 14 percent of Biden’s 1,500 agency appointees identify as LGBTQ+, including Transportation Secretary **Pete Buttigieg**, the first openly LGBTQ individual to serve in the cabinet, and Assistant Health Secretary **Dr. Rachel Levine**, the first openly transgender person confirmed by the Senate.

However, the House-passed **Equality Act**, which adds LGBTQ+ individuals as a protected class within the Civil Rights Act, is languishing in the Senate. The Equality Act is vital to equal protection under the law, with more than half our states offering no LGBTQ **nondiscrimination protections.**

Transgender girls and women are the new **scapegoat** of the Religious Right and Christian nationalists, with unprecedented numbers of **discriminatory bills** being introduced and passed by state legislatures. In fact, the hysterical rush to “outlaw” or discourage transgender girls from participating in K-12 sports closely mimicks the wave of anti-marriage equality bills passed a generation ago. It wasn’t so long ago that even progressive politicians often dared not voice support for marriage equality. The anti-gay marriage activity at the state level seemed unstoppable, until the Supreme Court, reflecting the nation’s changing views, issued its historic **Obergefell** decision six years ago. The phony transgender bills are clearly a backlash against that decision.

Dismayingly, since **Obergefell**, a 5-4 decision written by Justice **Anthony Kennedy**, was issued, the composition of the Supreme Court has changed for the worse. Kennedy has been replaced by **Brett Kavanaugh** and Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** by Catholic myrmidon **Amy Coney Barrett**. Today there is a clear 6-3 extremist, Christian nationalist majority on the court.

And as this is written, we await the high court’s ruling on the **Fulton** case, in which Catholic Social

## ‘Christian Nationalist’ Bible Promotes False Story Of The Origins Of U.S. Law

Wall of Separation Blog - Rob Boston

Among Christian nationalists, it’s an article of faith that the U.S. government is based on the Bible. They believe this fervently and have, over the years, produced a steady stream of books, DVDs, websites and other material that promotes the fallacious “Christian nation” view. Now they’re even getting their own Bible.

“**The God Bless the USA Bible**” will go on sale this September. The Bible, a King James Version, includes the text of the U.S. Constitution, the Pledge of Allegiance and the words to “God Bless the U.S.A.,” by singer **Lee Greenwood**. This particular version is attracting some critical attention because of the way it attempts to link the Bible to American government.

**Anthea Butler**, a professor of religion at the University of Pennsylvania and author of the new book, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, put it well: “You put a document made for a nation up against what many people believe are the words of God and say those things are equal. Are you telling us these documents are equal? They’re not even meant to be compared. For many Christians, it would be offensive.”

Other folks will be offended as well – for example, anyone who respects U.S. history. Put simply, our government is not based on the Bible. There’s no model for America’s republican model of government in that religious text. The Bible, when it speaks of government at all, offers the products of its time: theocratic states and nations run by autocratic kings.

Features like democracy, representative governing bodies like senates and features like separation of powers come from different historical eras and were refined even further by our founders (who still got a lot of things wrong by ignoring the rights of enslaved people and women).

In 2003, a group of **legal scholars and historians came together** to write

a court brief debunking the assertion that U.S. law is based on the Ten Commandments. In doing so, they also exposed the lie of a biblical origin of our law.

The scholars pointed out that various sources influenced American government, among them English common and statutory law, Roman law, the civil law of continental Europe and private international law. The writings of figures such as **William Blackstone, John Locke, Adam Smith** and others as well as the Magna Carta, the Federalist Papers and other sources also played a role.

“Each of these documents had a far greater influence on America’s laws than the Ten Commandments,” asserted the scholars’ brief. “Indeed, the legal and historical record does not include significant and meaningful references to the Ten Commandments, the Pentateuch or to biblical law generally.” The final nail in the Christian nationalist coffin comes from the text of the Constitution itself, a secular document that contains no preference for, or even recognition of, Christianity.

Despite what some Trumpian conservatives seem to believe these days, simply saying something over and over again in an aggressive manner does not make it a fact.

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# White House Adviser's Oath A Reminder: No One Has To Swear An Oath Of Office On A Bible

Wall of Separation Blog - Rob Boston

Eric Lander, the new director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, was sworn in on June 2nd. He took the Oath of Office on a 529-year-old copy of the ancient Jewish text *Pirkei Avot*, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Public officials who choose to take oaths of office on texts other than the Bible often spark Christian nationalist outrage. (Muslim public officials who use Qurans really get them going.) Many Christian nationalists, including Q-Anon crank U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), have insisted that the law requires that the Bible be used for swearing-in ceremonies.



It does not. Here are the facts:

**Nothing in the Constitution requires that a Bible be used when the president takes the Oath of Office.** Article 2, Section 1, of the

U.S. Constitution deals with the Oath of Office for the president. It lists the wording for the oath – which, by the way, does not end with the words “So help me, God” – but says nothing about Bibles.

To be sure, many public officials do take their oaths of office on a Bible. But that’s a matter of tradition and personal choice, not a requirement.

**Members of Congress and state and local**

**lawmakers are not required to use Bibles either.** Article VI, Section 3, of the Constitution outlines how members of Congress, members of state legislatures and others are to take their oaths. It states, “The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution.” No wording is specified, and no books are mentioned.

Members of Congress are officially sworn in *en masse* during a brief ceremony, and no books, religious or otherwise, are used. It is only during private ceremonies that are held later for the purpose of a photo-op that books are commonly used.

**A public official can use a religious text other than the Bible.** If he or she chooses, a public official can take the Oath of Office on texts reflecting the beliefs of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Wicca or another faith. Many have done so. In 2007, former U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) took the oath on a copy of the Quran that had been owned by Thomas Jefferson.

**A public official can use a non-religious book.** In January 2020, three newly elected members of the Manilus, N.Y., Town Board took their oaths on a book containing the town code. Other political leaders have used copies of the U.S. Constitution. In 2019, Kelli Dunaway, a newly elected member of the St. Louis County Council in Missouri, chose to be sworn in on a copy of *Oh, The Places You’ll Go!*, a book by famous children’s author Dr. Seuss. You don’t even have to use a physical book. In 2014, when Suzan G. LeVine was sworn in as U.S. ambassador to Switzerland and Lichtenstein, she took the oath on a copy of the U.S. Constitution that had been downloaded to a Kindle. She was reportedly the first federal official sworn in on an e-reader.

Leaving this to individual choice makes perfect sense. Despite the cries of outrage from Christian nationalists, nothing would be gained by compelling people to swear an oath on a religious book that holds no meaning to them. In fact, that would grossly violate the right of conscience and make a mockery of the religious freedom our First Amendment protects.

## LGBTQ+ continued from page 3

Charities has sued the city of Philadelphia insisting the city must be forced to fork over tax dollars so it can defy the city’s non-bias policy and discriminate against placement of foster children in LGBTQ+ homes. Given the fact that the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had unanimously ruled against the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which runs Catholic Social Services, this can only mean that the high court plans to reverse that ruling. We know the city will lose, we just don’t yet know the extent of the damage until that imminent decision is published.

Biden has yet to speak out on the urgent need to correct and expand the U.S. Supreme Court and federal judiciary, a third of which has been appointed by Trump to Christian nationalist specifications. Perhaps the upcoming *Fulton* decision will open his eyes to the fact that Trump has already “packed” and “stacked” the federal judiciary, and he needs to act now to counteract that and save true religious and other liberty in the United States. It is a fact that the only organized opposition to LGBTQ+ rights is religious in nature.

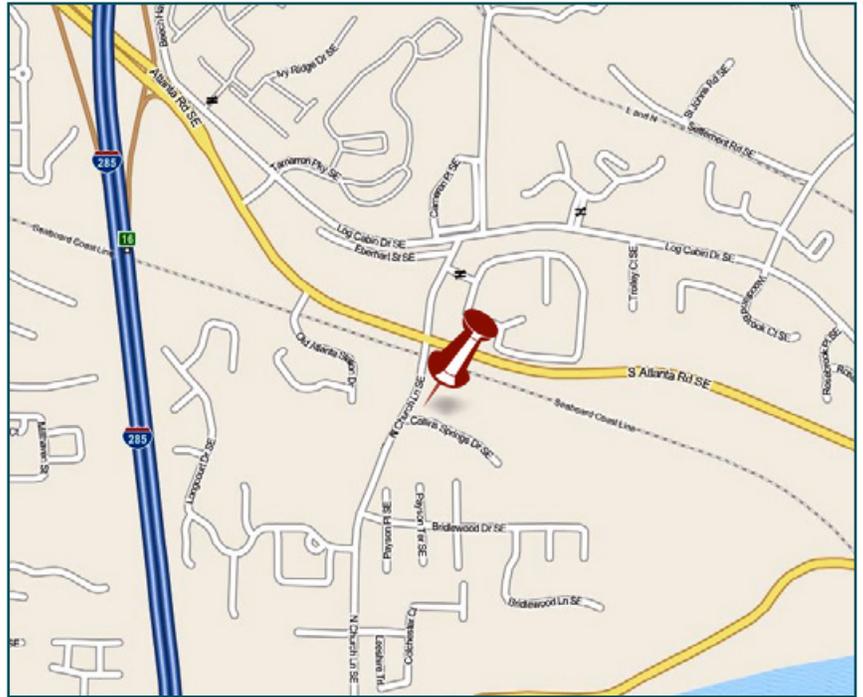
There can be no full equality in the United States — or in any state — until its laws and courts are freed from religious control and dogma.

*Dare To Think  
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall  
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**Kathleen Johnson  
6/13/21 1:00 pm EDT  
(via Zoom)**



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