

Come to the July 4 Cookout!



NO REGULAR MEETING THIS MONTH. THERE WILL BE A 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION INSTEAD.

The Atlanta Freethought Society & Freedom from Religion Foundation will co-sponsor this event. Join us and get to know your fellow secular citizens and celebrate the 4th with us.

We will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, and condiments. We also will have soft drinks, tea, coffee, plates, cups, and dinerware. You need to bring a side dish or dessert for yourself and to share. Feel free to bring your favorite adult beverage.

Come by around 5:00 p.m. We plan to eat at around 6:00 p.m. and you can stay as long as you like. Please let us know you are coming via Meetup or our Facebook page so we can know how much food to cook. As we had to get rid of a lot of seating in the pavillion, it would be helpful if you could bring folding chairs.

Atlanta Freethought Society

GAME NIGHT

Game Night is over for the summer.
We will start back up when the weather is cooler!

AFS Calendar

Jul 4 Independence Day Cookout! 5 pm

NO JULY MEETING!

Aug 11 Board Meeting 11 am

Aug 11 General Meeting (Live/Online) 1 pm

All events are combo Live/Zoom unless noted and are subject to change.



For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!
[meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](https://www.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 and also presented online (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. Announced events are subject to change.



- 14 Jul **NO MEETING. WILL HAVE 4TH OF JULY COOKOUT INSTEAD.**
- 11 Aug **Miriam Beattie on Jehovah's Witnesses**
- 8 Sep **TBA**
- 13 Oct **TBA**

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. 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.

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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Media puts the spotlight on the Louisiana Ten Commandments law – and Americans United

By Rob Boston • Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry (R) signed a bill mandating display of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms on June 19. Americans United and its allies were ready: That same day, we announced we'd see him in court.

The lawsuit was filed June 24 by Americans United, the American Civil Liberties Union (both the national office and its Louisiana affiliate) and the Freedom From Religion Foundation with pro bono counsel Simpson Thacher Bartlett LLP. We represent nine Louisiana families from various religious and nonreligious traditions who object to a state-mandated version of the Ten Commandments being forced on their children.



Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry (R)

Media interest has been intense. In the Communications Department, our inboxes exploded as reporters reached out, wanting to get AU's comments. We had some reporters contact us from overseas, and AU President and CEO Rachel Laser even appeared on a radio show hosted by Todd Starnes, a former Fox News figure whose views, to put it mildly, don't jibe with Americans United's.



AU President Rachel Laser

out about the lawsuit. Here are some of the highlights:

-Laser deftly outlined the problems with the law on MSNBC's "The ReidOut with Joy Reid." <https://www.msnbc.com/reidout>

-This [Associated Press](https://apnews.com/article/) story appeared in newspapers and news sites nationwide. <https://apnews.com/article/>

Working overtime to spread the word, Laser and other members of the AU staff have spent the past several days fielding requests for media interviews, and my colleagues have worked overtime to get the word

[ten-commandments-louisiana-schools-religion-99b86fff51932374993c45ab3f0555c9](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/21/us/louisiana-ten-commandments-landry.html)

-A [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/21/us/louisiana-ten-commandments-landry.html) story put the law in context, noting that it's part of a larger Christian Nationalist agenda. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/21/us/louisiana-ten-commandments-landry.html>

-In this [USA Today](https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/columnist/2024/06/23/louisiana-ten-commandments-law-constitution-supreme-court/74162388007/) opinion column, Chris Brennan warned, "This has nothing to do with children or education and everything to do with rolling back constitutional protection of and from religion." <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/columnist/2024/06/23/louisiana-ten-commandments-law-constitution-supreme-court/74162388007/>

-KLFY-TV in Lafayette, La., provides a good example of how the story is playing locally. <https://www.klfy.com/louisiana/civil-liberties-groups-say-new-10-commandments-law-is-a-violation-of-religious-freedom/>

-Moisés Serrano, AU's media relations manager, did two interviews with Spanish-language media – Univision and Voz de America. This was a first for Americans United! (We don't have links, unfortunately.)



-Reuters, a news service with a global reach, covered the case [here](https://www.reuters.com/world/us/louisiana-requires-display-ten-commandments-all-classrooms-2024-06-19/). <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/louisiana-requires-display-ten-commandments-all-classrooms-2024-06-19/>

-Two iconic American magazines, *Forbes* and *Newsweek*, provided coverage. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/caileygleeson/2024/06/19/louisiana-becomes-first-state-to-require-ten-commandments-in-public-school-classrooms/> and <https://www.newsweek.com/new-bill-requiring-ten-commandments-classroom-sparks-outrage-1915012>

There were many other stories, and with the lawsuit being officially filed June 24th, we know there's more to come.

Why Do Atheists React So Badly to Being Proselytized?

By Ed Buckner • **Letters to a Free Country** • <https://edbuckner.substack.com/p/why-do-atheists-react-so-badly-to>

Why Aren't Atheists Congenial About Others Wanting to Convert Them?

As often happens, the premise of this question is off. Atheists and freethinkers, like Catholics and Buddhists and Muslims, vary tremendously in how they (we) respond to attempts to change our minds. And of course it's not just in terms of religious conversion: socialists or Canadian patriots being asked to become hard-edged capitalists or Mexican loyalists don't always respond graciously, either.

But let's stick to religion for now at least. And the variability is sometimes related to different kinds of approaches from the hopeful mind-changers.

The motivation of the ones attempting to change hearts and minds also matters, even if those motives can never be known with certainty. Consider, for example, an atheist like me who is eager for his cousin to turn away from his religious beliefs. If I approach Cousin Bob because I sincerely want what I see as a better life for him if he steps away from an exploitative preacher, that may be more palatable than if I want Bob to join my atheist cabal and empower us with more money and political power. (I hasten to add—no cabals for me.)



**Michael Servetus
circa 1511-1553 CE**

But imagine that you are a John Calvin-ish theological giant, a Swiss Protestant who thinks deeply and carefully and concludes that a Michael Servetus—who dared to tell people that there is only one God, not three—is dangerous to people's souls. Calvin led, or at the very least tacitly blessed, the Geneva Council in decreeing that Servetus should be burned alive. And then he was, in 1553.

C'mon, Ed—what does a horrific official murder from over 450 years ago have to do with Mormon missionaries or Jehovah's Witnesses knocking on my door? Surely polite disagreement is all that's needed?



One hopes. But it's worth remembering that religious differences have led to many thousands of violent outcomes—that the religious beliefs many hold dear and sincerely and profoundly count on to be true usually have a powerful emotional grip on believers.

When your close relative or best friend worries

Proselytize continued on page 5

Become a Member!

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

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 \$1000 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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FFRF to Tenn. police department: Paint over religious verse

Freedom From Religion Foundation

<https://ffrf.org/news/releases/ffrf-to-tenn-police-department-paint-over-religious-verse/>

The Freedom From Religion Foundation says the Bartlett Police Department in west-central Tennessee needs to paint over a religious verse in its headquarters.

FFRF has been informed that the department has religious quotes on the wall of its building. A New Testament verse is emblazoned below an American flag: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9.”

“Paintings that quote chapter and verse from the New Testament on BPD property are a clear promotion of Christianity,” FFRF Patrick O’Reiley Legal Fellow **Hirsh M. Joshi** writes to Bartlett Police Department Chief **Jeff Cox**.

Placing a biblical quote in government buildings fails to respect the First Amendment, FFRF emphasizes. This is explicitly a Christian quote — and only a Christian quote. Hence, it endorses religion over nonreligion and Christianity over all other faiths.

Citizens interact with and rely on law enforcement officers during some of the most urgent and vulnerable times of their lives, FFRF points out. These citizens should not be made to feel alienated, like political outsiders, because their local government they support with their taxes oversteps its power by placing a religious statement on government property.

And the police department shouldn’t privilege religious citizens. Such a show of religious preference undermines the credibility of the police department and causes religious minorities — including the nonreligious, who are the largest segment of the U.S. population today by religious “denomination” — to question the impartiality of law enforcement officials.

Citizens of Bartlett trust their law enforcement officials to attend to their secular duties. Spending taxpayer time and money placing religious messages on police department property is beyond the scope of secular government.

FFRF additionally notes that other police departments have removed the same bible citation from department property after receiving similar previous letters from FFRF. Failing to respect this constitutional right can be costly: FFRF sued the sheriff’s office in Brewster County, Texas, after that office put crosses on police vehicles and ignored our letters of complaint. Brewster County ended up removing the crosses and paying about \$20,000 in fees and costs to FFRF. Bartlett’s painting is equally unconstitutional.

This is why FFRF is insisting that the “Matthew 5:9” art must be removed from Bartlett Police Department property immediately.

“An open profession of Christianity or any religion from an entity sworn to serve and protect is unconstitutional and divisive,” says FFRF Co-President



BARTLETT POLICE DEPARTMENT

1h · 🌐

Please help welcome our two newest employees, Dispatcher Cheyenne and Crime Analyst Morgan. Some of you ... [See more](#)



Annie Laurie Gaylor. “We remind the Bartlett Police Department that it serves all of the town residents, not just Christians.”

The Freedom From Religion Foundation serves as the nation’s largest association of freethinkers, with 40,000 members and several chapters across the country, including almost 500 members and a chapter in Tennessee, and works as a state/church watchdog to safeguard the constitutional principle of separation between state and church.

Proselytize continued from page 4

that your Catholic/atheist/Muslim beliefs (or lack of) may condemn you to eternal suffering, and you are just as sure that he’s mistaken, finding the way forward may not be easy.

We should all guard against charlatans who just want to con us out of our money, but most proselytizing, especially one-on-one, isn’t that at all.

It’s also mostly not, despite what some of us want it to be, an invitation to rational debate or straightforward exchange of logic and data. Odds are, for example, that saying,

“Oh, Charlie, you need to read this 819-page, well-footnoted book and consider what might convince you to give up being a Methodist and converting to Islam—then you’ll grasp why your appeal isn’t likely to move me toward being a Methodist like you want to be,”

won’t help. If strangers come to your door to preach, stay civil but brevity is fine: “Thanks but I’m not interested.” Or perhaps don’t even go to the door if your doorbell camera alerts you well enough.

But if it’s a friend or kinsman who wants to convert you, he probably wants the best for you, not for you to persuade him he’s misguided, however sure you are that he is.

That’s just not easy to counter.

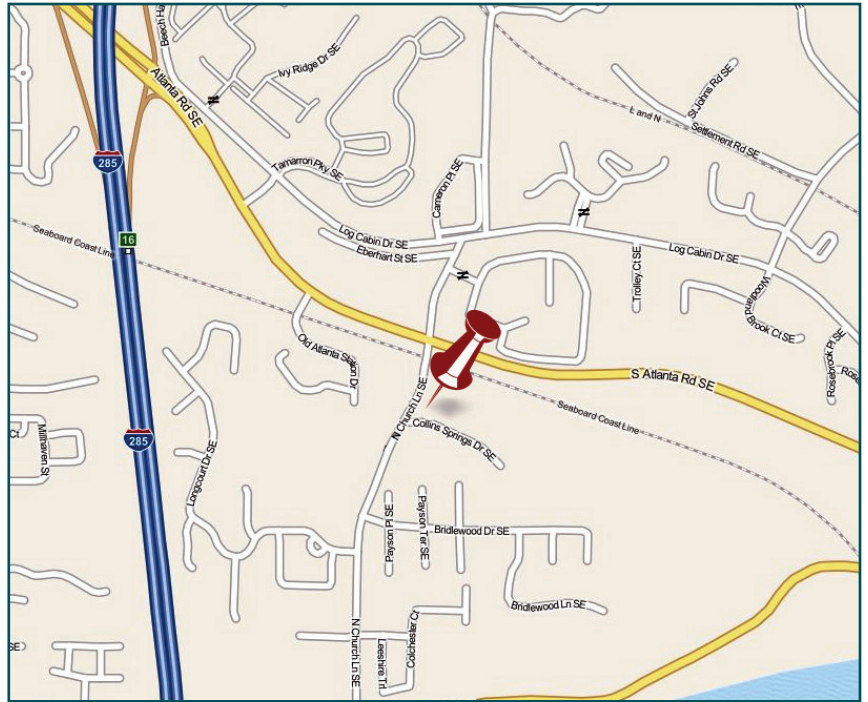
*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**Cookout at the
Hall**

**July 4 5:00 pm EST
(No July 14 meeting)**



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