

FREELY SPEAKING

Space Coast Freethought Association

October 2007

Upcoming Events

Sunday, October 7

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30pm at **DeGroodt** Library on Minton Rd. in Palm Bay. Our topic is **The War on Halloween**.

Costumes are encouraged.

October 12-14

Freedom From Religion Foundation Convention

Madison, Wisconsin, www.ffrf.org/events/

Sunday, October 14

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

9:00am at old Atlanta Bread Co. parking lot.

October 20

Freethought Day at Disney - Magic Kingdom, FL

www.spacecoastfreethought.org/disney/

November 4

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30pm at Melbourne Public Library on Fee Ave. We will show Jesus Camp, a movie about teaching children how to be dedicated Christian soldiers and "take back America for Christ."

November 10

SCFA Garage Sale

Contact us if you have any items to donate.

November 17

SCFA Game Night

7:00pm at Steve's house in Palm Bay. Ask for directions. We will also discuss the book Demon Haunted World by Carl Sagan.

December 2

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30 at Melbourne Public Library on Fee Ave. We will have a strategic planning meeting for the (alleged) War on Christmas.

December 15

SCFA Solstice Party

Want to keep informed of SCFA events? Join groups.yahoo.com/group/scfa_announce/

SCFA News

New SCFA board member

Long time member Bob Long has just become our newest board member.

Advertising ideas

There are many ways to advertise, from newspaper ads to billboards to that guy who hold up signs on street corners dressed as Fred Flintstone. Let us know what ideas you have, and help us investigate prices on some ideas we already have.

We want your stories!

When did you first realize you were an atheist or agnostic? Tell us your story (a paragraph or two), and if we like it we'll post it on our website. Please include name (or anonymous) and city/state. Send stories to spacecoastfreethought@yahoo.com.

American's United "First Freedom First"

Sign the petition at any SCFA meeting or the AU website, www.au.org.

This Month in Freethought History

Halloween, Oct. 31 -- "Now the religious right is joining the war against children, saying Halloween is a satanic plot. A Costa Mesa Christian group, Citizens for Excellence in Education, says the witch's broomstick is a phallic symbol of pagan worship. Yet another reason not to clean the house. The group says a 'spiritual battle' is raging on this night as covens of witches and other pagan religions call forth their demon spirits.' Even kids know demons are make-believe. It's unreal adults you have to worry about." -- Rob Morse, SF Chronicle, 1993



Printed on recycled paper.

Church-State Update

Local and national news about the issues that violate the separation between religion and government

National

High court won't review N.Y. law mandating birth-control coverage (10/1)

The Supreme Court today declined to enter a church-state dispute over whether some religious organizations can be forced to pay for workers' birth-control health insurance benefits, a growing trend in the states.

The Court let stand a New York court ruling upholding a state law that forces religious-based social service agencies to subsidize contraceptives as part of prescription drug coverage they offer employees. New York is one of 23 states that require employers which offer prescription benefits to employees to cover birth-control pills as well, the groups say.

Catholic Charities and other religious groups argued New York's law violates their First Amendment right to practice their religion because it forces them to violate religious teachings that regard contraception as sinful.

- firstamendmentcenter.org

Join our discussion list online at groups.yahoo.com/group/SpaceCoastFreethought/

Join SCFA! Annual membership is \$15 for one, \$25 for a family, and \$10 for seniors and students. Join using our web form at www.spacecoastfreethought.org/donate.html

Purchase SCFA merchandise

www.spacecoastfreethought.org/store.html

We have mugs, t-shirts, license plate covers, a Jefferson throw pillow, and our featured item:



The SCFA Bumper Sticker!
Only \$2.00.

Justices decline to hear Calif. church's bid to meet in library (10/1)

The Supreme Court today declined to consider an evangelical group's plea to hold religious services in a public library.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco had ruled that public libraries can block religious groups from worshipping in public meeting rooms.

Allowing worship services would amount to having taxpayers subsidize religious exercises, argued the Contra Costa County, Calif., Library Board.

The Sacramento-based church is led by Pastor Hattie Hopkins, "who believes that there are many people who need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, but are reluctant to set foot inside a traditional church building,"

- firstamendmentcenter.org

Group Sues Pentagon Over First Amendment Religion Issue (9/19)

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation filed a lawsuit against the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and U.S. Army Major Paul Welborne. The suit alleges that Army specialist Jeremy Hall, who is currently serving in Iraq, had his First Amendment rights violated when he was threatened and otherwise harassed because he declined to participate in a Thanksgiving prayer ceremony.

Hall also received permission from a military chaplain to organize a group for atheist soldiers. When the group met, Major Welborne broke it up, and threatened to charge Hall with violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Hall says that Welborne further threatened to block Hall's re-enlistment in the Army if the atheist group continued to meet.

The Pentagon has also responded to a complaint by MRFF that Defense Department officials violated their own regulations by appearing in a video to promote a fundamentalist Christian organization.

- motherjones.com

Church-State Update

Local and national news about the issues that violate the separation between religion and government

Florida

Hebrew classes to resume at Fla. charter school (9/12)

A taxpayer-funded charter school in Ft. Lauderdale, centered on Hebrew instruction, can resume classes in the language, county school board members voted yesterday, saying concerns on the Jewish faith seeping into public classrooms had largely been resolved.

The Ben Gamla Charter School in Hollywood said it would begin teaching Hebrew again on Sept. 17, more than three weeks after Broward County schools Superintendent James Notter ordered the classes halted to allow further review of the curriculum.

The school can teach about the Jewish faith, but cannot advocate it. Some aspects of the curriculum had previously been challenged as doing the latter.

- firstamendmentcenter.org



Freethought Day at Disney

Saturday, October 20

Look for the **lime green!**

spacecoastfreethought.org/disney

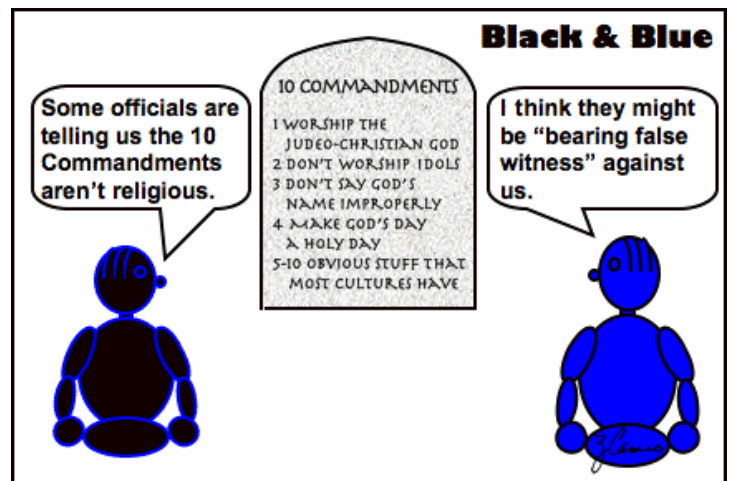
Brevard

Students challenge ban on Gothic clothing (9/14)

Federal courts have been debating student speech and expression rights for years as school officials struggle to balance the expectation of a safe learning environment with students' rights.

Brevard Public Schools' dress code policy prohibits Gothic-style clothing or accessories, citing that it is tied to "violent or death oriented themes." (They have since removed the specification of "Gothic.")

After listening to the appeal from the Goth students, school board member Larry Hughes said he would ask for clarification on the dress code as the board reviews all policies during the next few months.
- floridatoday.com



Quote: John Adams, born Oct. 30, 1735



"The United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature; and if men are now sufficiently enlightened to disabuse themselves of artifice, imposture, hypocrisy, and superstition, they will consider this event as an era in their history. Although the detail of the formation of the American governments is at present little known or regarded either in Europe or in America, it may hereafter become an object of curiosity. It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of Heaven, more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses."

Volunteering & Activism

What you can do to help strengthen the wall of separation between religion and government and put a positive face on atheism.

Report problems

Let us know if there is a church/state separation problem in Brevard County. We can help you determine the best course of action. We are also an associate member of American's United and would be happy to help you work with them if necessary.

Watch out for problems

Watch school board and city council meetings. Either attend in person or watch on cable television. If you regularly watch a particular meeting, let us know so we don't duplicate effort.

TV schedule: www.brevardcounty.us/scgtv/schedule.cfm

School Board archive: www.brevard.k12.fl.us/fp-includes/events/archive.html

Write letters to the editor

Respond to a negative letter or article, or write one about whatever's on your mind. Let the rationalist point of view be heard and let people know we exist. Remember to:

- Keep to one point - don't ramble
- Keep it polite - people often respond better
- Keep it accurate - quote statistics and sources
- Keep it positive - don't just say what's wrong, offer solutions

Florida Today

www.floridatoday.com/forms/services/letters.htm

They will contact you to confirm your letter.

Distribute literature

Most public libraries allow brochures. Just check with the libraries, who will need to approve the brochure firsts. If you would like to adopt a library, let us know and we'll either send you our brochures or you can print them off yourself. If you know of another place that allows brochures, please let us know.

Quote: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born Oct. 21, 1772



"Look through the whole histories of countries professing the Romish religion and you will uniformly find the leaven of this besetting and accursed principle of action -- that the end will sanction any means."

Virtual wall

Sign our virtual wall of separation, spacecoastfreethought.org/brick.html

Book drive

Bring your used freethought books to any SCFA event for collection.

Adopt-a-Road

Help us clean up Palm Bay Rd. We meet most months in front of the old Atlanta Bread Co. on the second Sunday of the month. Let people know freethinkers care about their community. Schedule: spacecoastfreethought.org/adoptaroad.html

Tell people you're a freethinker

Wear shirts and buttons that espouse your views. Put a bumper sticker on your car. Put your favorite freethought quote or website in your email signature. Tell your friends and family. Let people know that freethinkers are all around them.

SCFA Board of Directors

Dianna Narciso, president
 Doug Cramer, vice-president
 Toni Sweeney, treasurer
 Cameo Johnson-Cramer, secretary
 Steven Brown
 Bob Long
 Mike Sweeney

The board of directors meets monthly to discuss the future of SCFA. We plan meeting agendas, develop and implement advertising strategies, decide on social opportunities for our members, and more.

Space Coast Freethought Association

(SCFA) is a nonprofit community of reason-based individuals organized to facilitate social interaction, promote the non-theistic, rationalist viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse, reinforce the First Amendment guarantee of separation between government and religion through education and activism, and work in coalition with like-minded organizations where joint action is needed to achieve these goals.