

FREELY SPEAKING

Space Coast Freethought Association

April 2008

Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 6

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30 at Melbourne Public Library on Fee Ave. We will discuss the Legal Basis for Church/State Separation.

Sunday, April 13

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

10:00am at Palm Bay Rd. & Stack shopping center.

Thursday, May 1

SCFA Monthly Meeting & National Day of Reason Dinner

This month's meeting will be held during the National Day of Reason Dinner.

May 9–11

Humanists of Florida Conference

Sarasota, FL. Speakers include **David Sloan Wilson**, an evolutionary biologist ("Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change the Way We Think About Our Lives") who directs EvoS (a campus-wide program that applies evolutionary theory to different academic disciplines) and **Alan Charney**, the program director for USAction.

floridahumanist.org

Sunday, May 11

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

10:00am at Palm Bay Rd. & Stack shopping center.

Sunday, June 1

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30 at Melbourne Public Library on Fee Ave. We will discuss Logical Fallacies.

Sunday, June 8

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

10:00am at Palm Bay Rd. & Stack shopping center. This will be the last adopt-a-road until fall.

Sunday, July 6

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30 at Melbourne Public Library on Fee Ave.

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

SCFA News

City Council and County Commission Invocations

It has come to SCFA's attention that the Palm Bay City Council has been starting their meetings with a religious (usually Christian) prayer. SCFA has contacted American's United about this issue, and we are currently monitoring the city council to gather more information on their practices.

Sign the virtual wall

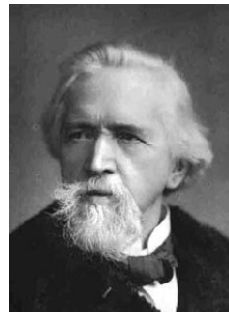
We now have ~200 signatures on our wall. Fellow church/state supporters from across the country and Canada have signed our wall. See what they have to say at: spacecoastfreethought.org/brick.html.

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

Quote: George Jacob Holyoake, April 13, 1817



"Free thought means fearless thought. It is not deterred by legal penalties, nor by spiritual consequences. Dissent from the Bible does not alarm the true investigator, who takes truth for authority not authority for truth. The thinker who is really free, is independent; he is under no dread; he yields to no menace; he is not dismayed by

law, nor custom, nor pulpits, nor society--whose opinion appalls so many. He who has the manly passion of free thought, has no fear of anything, save the fear of error."



Printed on recycled paper.

Church-State Update

*A Report on Church-State Legal Issues
Affecting Brevard County Citizens*

National

Supreme Court to Consider Religious Monuments Case (3/31)

Officials in Pleasant Grove City, Utah, asked the Court to step into the lawsuit brought by the religious group known as Summum, saying that if the group prevails, governments could be inundated with demands to display donated monuments. The dispute stems from Pleasant Grove City's refusal to allow the display of a "Seven Aphorisms of Summum" monument in the same park that is the home for a Ten Commandments monument donated by the Fraternal Order of Eagles 47 years ago. At issue is whether a donated monument displayed by a municipality remains the private speech of the original donor or is government speech. Another issue is whether placing donated monuments in a government-owned park creates a public forum or whether the government retains authority to select which monuments to display. The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver ruled that the monument remains the private speech of the donor and that the park is a public forum. "Government bodies are now sitting targets for demands that they grant 'equal access' to whatever comparable monuments a given group wishes to have installed, be it Summum's Seven Aphorisms, an atheist group's Monument to Freethought or Rev. Fred Phelps's denunciations of homosexual persons," lawyers for Pleasant Grove City wrote in asking the Supreme Court to intervene. In response, the religious group says government bodies always have the option of banning display of all privately donated monuments."

– firstamendmentcenter.org

Florida

Amendment to Remove Prohibition of Government Religious Funding of Religion Approved for November Ballot (3/26)

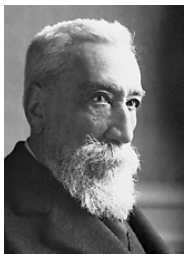
The Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission narrowly approved an amendment that will appear on the November ballot that would remove the so-called "no-aid" clause of the current Florida Constitution: "No revenue of the state or any political subdivision or agency thereof shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution." And replace it with: "Individuals or entities may not be barred from participating in public programs because of religion."

Supporters of the change claim that the "no-aid" clause puts many current programs in jeopardy, such as the Florida Bright Futures scholarships. But Commissioner Les Miller, a Baptist deacon and former state senator, described this as a "scare tactic".

Amendment to Allow Government Funding of Religious-based Public Services Fails (4/4)

A proposed amendment to allow government funding of religious public services failed by one vote at the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission. Below is an excerpt from the proposed change:

"The legislature is not limited from enacting and funding programs allowing families and individuals to use public and private providers, without regard to the religious nature of any provider or participant"



Quote: Nobel Prize winning author Anatole France, born April 16, 1844

"If 50 million people believe a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing."

"The thoughts of the gods are not more unchangeable than those of the men who interpret them. They advance--but they always lag behind the thoughts of men... The Christian God was once a Jew. Now he is an anti-Semite."

Church-State Update con't.

Florida

"Evolution Academic Freedom" Bill Moving Through Florida Senate and House

A so-called "Evolution Academic Freedom" bill is currently being reviewed in the Florida legislature (SB 2692/HB 1483). "Provides public school teachers with a right to present scientific information relevant to the full range of views on biological and chemical evolution. Prohibits a teacher from being discriminated against for presenting such information. Prohibits students from being penalized for subscribing to a particular position on evolution. Clarifies that act does not require change in state curriculum standards or promote any religious position."

House Approves Bill That Would Require Ultrasounds Prior to All Abortions (3/26)

Ultrasounds are currently required only for second and third trimester abortions. HB 257 would extend that to all abortions. The current and proposed law requires physicians to perform the ultrasounds and to inform women about the option of viewing them. The Senate is currently considering a companion bill. - *medicalnewstoday.com*

Previous Events

Sunday, March 2

SCFA Monthly Meeting

Eostre Egg Hunt. One of the great mysteries in life is how a bunny lays chocolate filled eggs and then disperses them around the world. But we're grateful.

Sunday, March 9

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

All that Palm Bay Rd. construction can't stop us.

Thursday, March 20

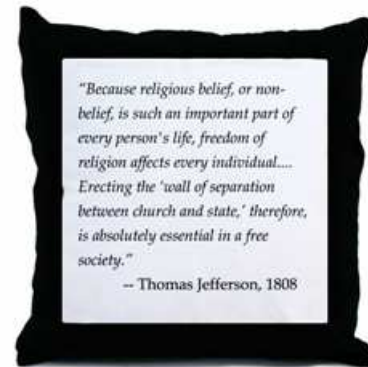
Vernal Equinox

The Earth has been reborn again. Hurray.

Purchase SCFA merchandise

spacecoastfreethought.org/store.html

Thomas Jefferson, born April 13, 1743



18"x18" Jefferson throw pillow
Only \$17.99.

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 spacecoastfreethought.org/donate.html

SCFA Board of Directors

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

If you have any input for the SCFA board of directors, please contact us at info@spacecoastfreethought.org or use the contact form at our website, spacecoastfreethought.org.



Quote: Ulysses S. Grant, born April 27, 1822

"Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private schools, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate."

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 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

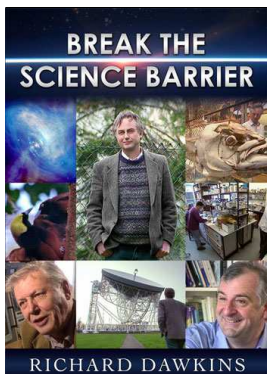
Florida Today

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.



"SCIENCE is useful but that is not all it is. Science can be uplifting, thrilling, life-enhancing. Originally broadcast on Britain's Channel 4 in 1996."

Available free online at:
<http://richarddawkins.net/>

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.



Quote: James D. Watson, born April 6, 1928

Nobel Prize winning geneticist and co-discoverer of DNA. "The biggest advantage to believing in God is you

don't have to understand anything, no physics, no biology. I wanted to understand."



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.