



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 4, 2019

## Anti-religious Freedom Group Bullies Florida Sheriff Over Patriotic Message on Squad Cars

A Wisconsin anti-religious freedom group has targeted a Florida sheriff's department over a patriotic message on the department's squad cars.

In late October the sheriff's office in Brevard County, on the Atlantic coast, took to [Facebook](#) to announce that in the coming months its squad cars would begin sporting a new, patriotic message of faith in God and pride in America. "While our vehicles will continue to include the iconic 'Shuttle' design in honor of our Space Center history, they will now also include new graphics of an American flag and the phrase 'In God We Trust' that are both prominently displayed on each unit," read the Facebook post. "To us there is no greater honor than to live in the greatest country in the world and serve as a law enforcement officer in Brevard County where our citizens love us, trust us, and protect us just as much as we love, trust, and protect them."



Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey explained that the idea for the new squad car graphics came from a "very proud" local veteran, "who made mention of the idea after sharing with me how proud he is of our agency and how passionately we support our veterans. The idea was then presented to other members of our outstanding active, reserve, and veteran military community, who all loved the idea and new design!"

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Not surprisingly, the news attracted the attention of the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), which has become notorious over the years for its specious attacks on school districts, law-enforcement agencies, churches, and other groups in communities across America for supposedly violating the First Amendment's religious "separation" clause.

In the case of the Brevard sheriff's office, shortly after the department's announcement, the FFRF parachuted into action, "urging" Sheriff Ivey and his department to remove the patriotic, God-honoring stickers from the squad cars.

"Spending taxpayer time placing religious messages on patrol cars is beyond the scope of secular government," complained the FFRF's attention-seeking president Annie Laurie Gaylor in an open letter to Ivey. "Further, in a time when citizens nationwide are increasingly distrustful of law enforcement officers' actions, it is frightening and politically dubious for the local police department to announce to



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citizens that officers rely on the judgment of a deity rather than on the judgment of the law.”

Referring to “In God We Trust” as a “controversial national motto,” Gaylor charged that including the phrase on the Brevard County squad cars “implies a religious test for employment” and gives an “appearance of bias” on the part of the department. “Citizens should not be made to feel offended, excluded, and like political outsiders because the local government they support with their taxes oversteps its power by prominently placing a religious statement on Office vehicles,” Gaylor opined in her epistle to the sheriff.

David Williamson, director of the FFRF’s central Florida franchise, also weighed in, insisting that because law-enforcement officers “take an oath to protect and serve all citizens,” they must of necessity abandon the legal public acknowledgement of faith in God that is inherent in America’s national motto. “Displaying a preference for religion so clearly right on county property is a betrayal of that oath,” Williamson complained.

In response Sheriff Ivey confirmed that the department would move ahead with the new squad car graphics, pointing out that federal courts have ruled in favor of local government agencies using the national motto in such a context. He noted one particular court decision that found that “the national motto ‘In God We Trust’ has nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of religion. Its use is of a patriotic or ceremonial character, and bears no true resemblance to a governmental sponsorship of a religious exercise.”

Image: [Screenshot from facebook.com](#)



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