



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 28, 2011

## ACLU Makes Early Assault on Christmas

In a letter to city officials, the ACLU argued that “displaying a Nativity scene and menorah violates the separation of church and state,” reported the paper. “The problem, the rights group said, is that the city is advocating for two religions while ignoring all the others.”

The ACLU’s Barry Butin said his group thinks Plantation’s holiday spirit is “a violation of the First Amendment and an endorsement of religion. If they were really neutral and didn’t favor one over the other, they’d have a more inclusive display: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist.”



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This is not the first time the ACLU has targeted the city of Plantation for its Christmas and Hanukkah displays. According to the *Sentinel*, the secular watchdog group has warned city officials twice in the past about religious displays, “acting on a complaint from an unidentified board member who doesn’t live in Plantation but photographed the creche and menorah one Christmastime.”

Brad Koogler, president of the Broward ACLU, said he trusted that “the city will uphold religious freedom and refrain from any further displays on city property.”

An editorial on the Christian [Manhattandeclaration.org](http://Manhattandeclaration.org) website noted that the ACLU is relying on the First Amendment’s supposed “establishment” clause, which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Explained the Manhattan editorial: “What the city of Plantation is NOT doing is making a law or ordinance establishing a religion. What they are doing is complying with a 1984 U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing cities to display religious symbols provided they do not endorse one faith over another.”

One Plantation resident, 83-year-old Len Torres, told the *Sentinel* that the city should fight for its right to display Christmas symbols in the predominantly Christian community. “It’s not inappropriate because this country is 80 percent Christian and it’s a recognition of Christianity and recognition of Jesus’ birthday,” he said. According to a 2007 survey by the [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#), nearly 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christian.

City Councilman Bob Levy said the ACLU challenge puts the city in a dilemma. “If we agree to put the Nativity scene out there, we are in danger of a lengthy lawsuit,” [CBN News](#) quoted him as saying. “If we don’t put it out there, we unfortunately are turning our backs on a number of citizens who would like it there.”

Wondered the Manhattan editorialist: “Are the days when public displays of the religious principles upon which this country were founded coming to an end? They most certainly will if more and more people adopt the views of the Rabbi of Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El in Plantation, Sheldon Harr, who suggested the city should just spare itself the trouble by saying ‘Why create the havoc?’” According to



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the *Sentinel*, Harr recommended that the city divest itself of religious displays altogether.

Meanwhile, the [Chino Valley Unified School District](#) (CVUSD) in California appears to be going in the opposite direction, according to [OneNewsNow.com](#). The news site reported that the district's school board has agreed to change the name of the winter holiday break back to its traditional name — "Christmas vacation."

Reported OneNewsNow: "James Na, president of the CVUSD board, contends that Christmas was proclaimed as a national holiday in 1870. He says the school district's choice is honorable and should be adopted by all schools."

Na said that the school board had been asked "by students, parents, and even some of our own staff members, saying that many students are confused with 'Christmas' vacation versus 'winter' vacation. Even at the classroom setting, the vacation is referred to as Christmas vacation. So we brainstormed and came up with adding Christmas to the 'Winter Break' so there will be less confusion for everyone."

Noting that Christmas is a federal holiday, the school board head insisted that it only made sense to refer to the vacation time by its appropriate and traditional name. "Na says he hopes schools in other counties and states will recognize Christmas as well, rather than catering to an environment of political correctness," reported OneNewsNow. "We cannot let our freedom go through this tremendous amount of erosion from our negligence as adults," Na said. "Christmas is not only our national holiday, but it is observed and celebrated around the globe."



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