



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 28, 2018

Atheist Women Demand Removal of Arkansas Ten Commandments Monument

A group of atheist women in Arkansas are demanding that a three-ton, six-foot-tall Ten Commandments monument gracing the State Capitol in Little Rock be removed.

The four women — one who proudly declares her atheism and three who insist they are only agnostic — filed a lawsuit against the state with the help of the Arkansas franchise of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), charging that the monument represents a supposedly unconstitutional endorsement of Judeo-Christian religious convictions by the Arkansas state government. The four are members of a local cycling club whose route takes them past the monument — which makes them uncomfortable.



A 2015 state law paved the way for the Decalogue display to be erected at the Arkansas Capitol, as long as it is privately funded. The original monument (shown above) was destroyed by a man who intentionally ran his car into the granite monument barely 24 hours after it was erected. A replacement monument was installed in April of this year, surrounded by protective concrete barriers.

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Separate complaints were filed against the latest monument, and have been consolidated into one lawsuit filed by the ACLU. “The courts have been clear that the First Amendment protects religious freedom and prohibits the government from engaging in this kind of overt and heavy-handed religious favoritism,” insisted ACLU spokesperson Rita Sklar. “By endorsing a specific set of religious beliefs on government property, Arkansas politicians are violating the constitutional rights of the people they’re supposed to serve.” She added that “when government officials take sides in matters of religion, they alienate those who don’t subscribe to that particular set of beliefs and undermine everyone’s right to religious freedom.”

Predictably, the media-minded Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) has also insinuated itself into the conflict, filing its own redundant lawsuit against the monument. “The state of Arkansas has no business telling citizens what religious practices and beliefs to engage in,” echoed FFRF attorney Patrick Elliott. “This Ten Commandments monument violates the rights of conscience of citizens.”

Donna Cave, one of the plaintiffs in the case, called the privately maintained monument a “government-sponsored religious shrine,” insisting that it “sends a divisive message that the state endorses a specific religious doctrine to the exclusion of all others.” She complained that the monument “makes me feel like a second-class citizen. Government officials shouldn’t be in the business of dividing people along religious lines — they should represent everyone.”



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Meanwhile, Republican State Senator Jason Rapert, who introduced the legislation allowing for the Ten Commandments display at the State Capitol, defended the presence of the monument. Rapert, who is also president of the American Heritage & History Foundation, said in a statement: “The sole reason we donated this monument to the State of Arkansas is because the Ten Commandments are an important component to the foundation of the laws and legal system of the United States of America and of the State of Arkansas. Passive acknowledgements of the role played by the Ten Commandments in our nation’s heritage are common throughout America, and the Supreme Court ruled in *Van Orden v. Perry* in 2005 that such monuments are constitutional.”

Rapert added that “if the Ten Commandments are good enough to be displayed in the United States Supreme Court Chamber and other state capitol grounds in Texas and around our nation, then they are good enough to be displayed in Arkansas. I look forward to a vigorous defense of the law in Arkansas.”

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