



## Atheists Continue War on Christmas

For a number of Americans, the Christmas season is a time for joy and love, but for others, it's an opportunity to stage a war against Christianity. The latest battle entails a blasphemous nativity scene from a group of atheists, which they have defended as a response to counteract the Christian "War on the Constitution."



Wisconsin is once again at the center of a major dispute, this time because Governor Scott Walker made the mistake of referring to the "holiday" spruce as a "Christmas tree." That prompted the Freedom from Religion Foundation to call Walker "a Teabagger governor wearing religion on his sleeves."

Now Walker has likely sealed his fate with the atheist organization, given that a nativity scene has been placed in the state capitol (above left), even as it was put together by a private group. But the atheist organization has found a way to respond. They will introduce their own version of the nativity.

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*The Blaze* reports:

In an effort to show further opposition to the nativity, [Freedom from Religion Foundation co-president Annie Laurie] Gaylor's group is planning what she calls a "slightly blasphemous ... irreverent tweak on the nativity scene." The FFRF is currently seeking a permit for the display.

When asked why the group would be putting up such a display, she answered, "There's no war on Christmas, there's a war on the Constitution during the entire month of December."

Constitutionalists point out that the Constitution makes no references to public Christmas displays, nor does it include the words "separation of church and state" anywhere in the document. And, in the absence of such language, they say, according to the Tenth Amendment, any say-so on the matter must be left to the states or to the people.

According to Gaylor, "We just don't think a nativity scene belongs in the Wisconsin State Capitol. It's the seat of state government and everybody should feel welcome there."

Julaine Appling of Wisconsin's Family Action, the conservative organization behind the capitol's nativity scene, does not understand the FFRF's opposition to the nativity.

"We think it's a very tasteful presentation," she said. She points out that the capitol is a forum wherein a variety of views are welcomed, and points to another display next to hers with a message from the FFRF that declares God does not exist. Still, Appling notes, "They have as much right to be there as we do. I think it's time for all of us to realize there's a lot of room for different voices."

"Interfaith Awareness Week" at Wisconsin's capitol rotunda provides an opportunity for a number of



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 13, 2011

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different religious traditions to be showcased. Appling's group is one of a number of groups that received permission. Her group's nativity display will be present at the capitol until the end of December.

Christmas tends to be a holiday that provokes such ire from atheist organizations, and seemingly brings out the worst in some of them.

Last Christmas, the American Atheists targeted the Christmas holiday in a billboard just outside of the Lincoln Tunnel in Weehawken, New Jersey. The \$20,000 billboard depicted the Nativity scene and read, "You KNOW it's a Myth. This season, celebrate reason." The group claimed that the sign was designed "to encourage existing atheists who are going through the motions of celebrating Christmas to stop."

However, when the spokesman for the American Atheists appeared on Fox News, he admitted, "The other part of the billboard is to call Christians out on their own history. Christmas is not the first nor the fifth nor the tenth holiday that places a god in the winter solstice. Many religions have placed their gods to be born on the winter solstice. Christianity is not unique in this subject and people need to understand that while Christmas is a Christian holiday, the season belongs to everyone."

In response to that billboard, a Catholic group posted a pro-Christmas billboard message directly across from the atheist one which read, "You know it's Real. This Season, Celebrate Jesus."

Overall, the war between the two billboards cost \$40,000.

This year, the American Atheists [posted](#) a similar billboard, costing approximately \$25,000, depicting a variety of images, including that of Jesus, Santa Claus, and the Devil. The sign reads, "37 million Americans know MYTHS when they see them. What do you see?" Again, the group claims the billboard's purpose is to "call out" closet atheists.

"This is when the closeted atheists go to church to be viewed as Christians, and this is when we want to call them out to stay home and enjoy the holidays," Silverman said. "We want people to realize that there may be atheists in their family, even if those atheists don't even know they are atheists."

This year, however, the Catholic League will not be responding to the atheist billboard. The group's president Bill Donohue claims that the atheist's billboard is not "good enough" to warrant a response.

"It's inane," Mr. Donohue said of the new billboard. "Nobody knows what this means. I mean, Neptune? Over here, we just looked at each other in puzzlement." He added, "Whenever you do a billboard, it has to have tremendous clarity and be quick and easy. If you have to keep thinking about it, it fails."

Blair Scott, communications director for the American Atheists, admits that this year's billboard lacks the same controversial elements as last year's.

"I think the big difference is that the billboard asks a question rather than making a statement," said Blair Scott, the group's communications director. "It's kind of like the difference between a Christian saying, 'You are going to hell,' and saying, 'Are you going to hell?' People don't get as upset."

Because that billboard did not provoke the same anger or controversy, however, the American Atheists [replaced](#) it with a more hard-hitting one, depicting Jesus and the Greek god Poseidon. That new billboard reads, "Tell your family you don't believe in gods...they just might agree."

Whether the Catholic League will respond to the newer billboard remains unknown.



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