



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 8, 2012

Don't Join Prayer Caucus, Atheist Leader Implores New Congressmen

The leader of the American Humanist Association has a request for new members of Congress: Don't join the [Congressional Prayer Caucus](#) because it "discriminates against non-religious Americans." In [a letter to incoming legislators](#), released shortly after the November 6 elections, the group's director, Roy Speckhardt, complained that some of the over 100 members of the Caucus, founded in 2005 by Congressman [Randy Forbes](#) (R-N.C.), "have repeatedly introduced and supported legislation that we feel is unconstitutional and often favors religious institutions and individuals over non-religious institutions and individuals."



Speckhardt noted that the Caucus supported Forbes' own [H.R. 888](#), that "opposes any effort to remove sectarian objects from our nation's public buildings" and "strongly advocated for the '[In God We Trust](#)' Resolution, which reaffirmed the phrase as our national motto."

He added with strong disapproval that the Caucus is also "one of the leading advocates for opening and closing each session of Congress with a prayer, which relegates non-religious Americans and others who don't pray to the status of second-class citizen."

The atheist leader wrote that while prayer "is important to many Americans, and they should feel secure in their freedom to practice their beliefs ... when public officials in Congress explicitly endorse public prayer, they alienate millions of non-religious Americans who oppose the joining of religion and government."

Speckhardt concluded his epistle by requesting freshmen congressmen "not to join the Congressional Prayer Caucus," and instead join the efforts of godless individuals such as himself to make sure that the supposed "wall of separation between church and state is strengthened and maintained."

The [Christian Broadcasting Network](#) noted that as part of its activities, the Caucus "gathers weekly in a room just off the House floor in the Capitol building to pray for each other, the week ahead, and the nation. It also works to defend the expression of faith in the public square such as prayer before public meetings and the public display of Christmas symbols."

In response to Speckhardt's audacious request, Forbes issued a statement saying that the letter represented "an unprecedented effort by an extremist group that wants to censor and shut down anything related to faith. The Congressional Prayer Caucus is one of the largest caucuses in Congress; it has over 105 members and we stand up and fight for religious freedoms and religious liberties."

During a December 4 appearance on the [Fox and Friends](#) news program, Forbes said while he has no issue with groups such as the AHA expressing their disbelief in God, the "unfortunate thing is these extremist groups don't give us the same right, and they want to censor our ability to say that we do



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believe in God and we do believe in our faith.”

He added that “what these extremist groups are fighting for — and they’ve got a lot of dollars and they’re well orchestrated — is to make certain that no one in government can even mention God or faith or religion, and no one in the church can mention anything about government. That is far from what the First Amendment was written to protect.”

As of yet, there has been no report of any new representatives responding favorably to Speckhardt’s letter.



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