

ARIZONA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE BANS SANTA CLAUS

Gale Garriott, chief counsel of the Agency Counsel Division of the Arizona Attorney General's office, has issued a memo banning the display of Santa Claus from areas open to the general public. In his memo of November 28, Garriott banned any items "that have a religious significance attached to them." He personally listed Santa Claus as an example. When workers complained, he issued a memo on December 6 that left in place all the banned items save that he excised the words "religious significance."

In an employee's own work area, "reasonable decorations that are respectful of the views of others and that are consistent with the mission and professionalism [sic] standards of the Office are permissible." In the general work area, "Unacceptable decorations would include nativity scenes, crosses, Stars of David, Christmas trees, Santa Clauses, Santa Claus related items, and other similar items that may be offensive to some of our employees or the public."

As a result of Garriott's decision, workers have now sarcastically displayed Holiday Greetings from the Loch Ness monster and Bigfoot.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"Gale Garriott, Arizona's Commissar of the Commonweal, needs to explain more fully what he means by decorations that are 'respectful of the views of others.' For example, snowflakes may be innocuous to him, but not to others. Therefore, why should he imply a tolerance for snowflakes when he could simply have added them to his censorial bag? After all, it makes no sense to ban Santa and allow snowflakes.

"We are contacting Garriott's boss, Attorney General Janet Napolitano, as well as Arizona Governor, Jane Hull, to inform them of their commissar's edict. We trust they will share our fascination with his mind."