

# DC METRO TRANSIT CENSORS CHRISTMAS AD

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the censoring of a Christmas ad in the District of Columbia:

To celebrate Christmas without celebrating Christ makes as much sense as celebrating Veterans Day without celebrating veterans. But don't tell that to the secular sages at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

WMATA has banned a Christmas ad sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington because it "depicts a religious scene and thus seeks to promote religion." The scene was mounted on a poster to be placed on the outside of metro buses. Its purpose is stated in its message: "Find the Perfect Gift." The scene neither mentions nor depicts Christ.

The archdiocese, represented by the distinguished law firm, Kirkland & Ellis, has sued WMATA on First Amendment grounds: freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion have both been violated.

Would WMATA allow a bus ad of Rev. Martin Luther King, in clergy garb, speaking from a pulpit before a congregation? Would it reject the ad on the grounds that it is a religious scene and is thus promoting religion?

Would WMATA reject a vile anti-religious ad? Or would it conclude that such a poster is merely an expression of free speech?

Religious speech does not automatically lose its constitutional protections because it is voiced on public property. This is a clear case of viewpoint discrimination, something which the courts have repeatedly struck down as unconstitutional. It is also an example of militant secularism

and anti-Christian bigotry.

To show how utterly ignorant the officials at WMATA are, consider that the City of New York recently approved the granting of a permit to the Catholic League to erect a life-size nativity scene in Central Park, on public property. If anything, our crèche is much more of a “religious scene” than the one sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, yet it has never been challenged as unconstitutional, not even by the ACLU.

Kudos to Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of the archdiocese, for standing up to the bullies at WMATA.

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