

DISSIDENTS AIM TO BLOCK PUBLIC'S ACCESS TO POPE

Poll after poll has shown that Pope Francis is very popular these days, with millions of Americans—of all religions or no religion—who clamored for an opportunity to welcome him when he arrived on our shores recently. Two groups—the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) and Americans United for Separation of Church and State—were predictably unhappy about that, and did all they could to limit the public's access to the pope.

Americans United was unhappy that the city of Cape May, New Jersey planned to broadcast the pope's September 27 Mass from nearby Philadelphia at the Cape May Convention Hall to accommodate "people who can't attend in person." The city, which has waived charges at the Convention Center for other non-profit events, organized this one in conjunction with the Cape May Ministerium, a group of clergy representing different denominations. When Americans United threatened to sue the city, the Cape May Ministerium stepped up as the sole sponsor, and the event went ahead as scheduled.

FFRF got similarly exercised about New York City's giveaway of tickets to see Pope Francis in Central Park September 25. This, the group said, made New York City appear "to be endorsing Pope Francis' sectarian religious message."

FFRF was also in high dudgeon over Pope Francis' scheduled meeting with inmates at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia September 27. As prisons are "public-supported," the group complained, the pope should not have been invited to meet with inmates; nor should inmates have been permitted to hand carve a chair to present to the pontiff, even though they volunteered to do so.

Freedom *From* Religion is an apt name for this group. Obviously

they care nothing for the Freedom *of* Religion of those who are incarcerated.