

# HATE GROUP JOINS THE FRACAS

The Westboro Baptist Church, a Kansas-based group, asked Washington Governor Chris Gregoire for permission to display an anti-Christmas sign next to the nativity scene in the Capitol building. The sign, "Santa Claus Will Take You to Hell," would also appear next to an atheist sign sponsored by the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

The governor was responsible for this mess. Having first acceded to the requests of atheists to attack Christmas, she was then confronted with the likes of the Westboro Baptist Church, a viciously anti-Catholic group.

Hate groups have a First Amendment right to freedom of speech, but they have no right to set the time and place. Moreover, freedom of speech is meaningless unless it can prevail unobstructed by attempts to stifle it.

In other words, Gov. Gregoire should have allowed the atheist group to display its sign at a different location or a different time. If she had done so, she would have been able to treat the Westboro Baptist bigots the same way.