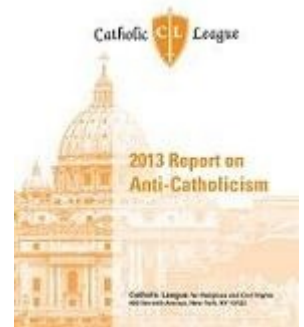


# THE WAR ON CHRISTMAS

The following article by Bill Donohue was published by Newsmax on December 18, 2013:



*There are signs that the “War on Christmas” is abating. In 1994, a year after I took over as president of the Catholic League, we successfully pressed Barneys, the upscale clothier on Madison Avenue, to remove an obscene manger scene from its storefront window. We erected a nativity scene in Central Park a year later, something we’ve done every year since. In subsequent years, we’ve been actively engaged in scores of skirmishes, winning some and losing some. Now it seems that things are calming down.*

*An examination of Catholic League activities in the “War on Christmas” is not dispositive, but it is an index of what has been happening in the dominant culture. Our records show that our involvement peaked in the years 2005-2007. Those were the years when we took on Wal-Mart, exacting an apology after we threatened a boycott following revelations that the mega-store was discriminating in its treatment of Christmas. Things got so bad that Jackie Mason and other Jewish leaders joined with us in protesting anti-Christmas attacks. TV shows and movies also featured assaults on Christian sensibilities during those years.*

*This year we have seen a clear downward tick in attempts to bash Christmas. Indeed, even vandalism is down: the number of nativity scenes being trashed is relatively low. But not all is well.*

*In 2013, as compared to previous years, the "War on Christmas" is being led more by national organizations, and less by local activists, than ever before. American Atheists, Freedom from Religion Foundation, and various humanist organizations are leading the way. Their weapon of choice is an array of billboards designed to denigrate Christmas. The Catholic League answered by erecting an enormous pro-Christmas billboard in Times Square, and two digital ones in New Jersey.*

*Militant atheists have also targeted the schools, seeking to deny any religious component to classroom celebrations, and Christmas-themed events. But there is a decided pushback, and it is not being led by the Catholic League or any other national organization: The good news is that Christians are taking things into their own hands, pressuring local authorities to accede to their reasonable demands.*

*Contrary to those who sell the bogus idea that the "War on Christmas" is not real, Christians who are fighting back are not obsessed with who is saying "Happy Holidays," and who is saying "Merry Christmas." On the contrary, they are engaged in serious efforts to stop those who want to censor Christmas. The evidence is clear that a small minority are hell bent on banning, trashing, and diluting the public expression of Christmas.*

*Nearly 80 percent of Americans are Christian, and 96 percent celebrate Christmas. Of the remaining four percent, most are indifferent, but are not hostile, to Christmas. That leaves a small, but dogmatically extreme, band of secularists (many of whom are ex-Christians) who are seeking to impose their agenda on the rest of us. It is up to decent Americans of all faiths, and indeed no faith, to see to it that the cultural fascists do not win the day.*



This billboard was placed in Times Square on West 42nd Street between 7th and 8th Avenues. It was on display from December 9, 2013 through January 5, 2014.

## September

**Bar Harbor, ME** – The City Council voted not to extend a lease that allowed a lighted evergreen tree to remain on town property year round. The tree was installed as a memorial to veterans who gave their lives and was accompanied by a plaque that read in part “The Christmas They Never Had.” The group which had sponsored the tree was ordered to remove it.

## October

**Wausau, WI** – The school board issued a notice to the Music Department of the Wausau West High School that the song list for their Master Singers concert had to be edited to reduce the number of proposed religious songs for their annual holiday shows. A ratio of one religious song for every five secular songs was proposed, as was the suggestion that the concert be postponed or not include any holiday music at all. In response, music director Phil Buch disbanded the Master Singers.

On October 15, the school board reversed its decision, instead deciding to hold off on making any decisions surrounding holiday musical selections. The Master Singers immediately began practicing for the holiday shows.

#### **October 16**

**Deerfield Beach, FL** – The city banned all holiday displays on public property that were not installed by the city itself. As a result of this new ban, a nativity scene that was traditionally placed in front of the local fire station was not displayed this year because it was provided by a private business. The new rule is in response to a protestor, who last year installed a “Festivus” pole made out of beer cans next to the nativity.

#### **October 18**

**Alton, IL** – Vandals caused damage at the town’s Christmas Wonderland display in Rock Spring Park before the volunteer tradesmen known as the “Grandpa Gang” could even finish setting up. The Christmas Wonderland is one of the region’s most popular Christmas attractions and helps raise money for local charities.

#### **November 1**

**Bordentown, NJ** – Constance Bauer, superintendent of the Bordentown Regional School District banned religious songs from their schools’ annual “winter” concerts. “Religious music should not be part of the elementary program(s),” Bauer wrote.

The decision was reached after two families complained and the school district's legal firm recommended removing the songs.

After a public outcry, and the intervention of Alliance Defending Freedom, Bauer changed her mind and lifted the ban on November 5th. Bauer said, "In reviewing additional legal considerations and advice taken on this matter and the expressed sentiments of the community at large, I have reconsidered the decision on the musical selections for the upcoming winter programs."

### **November 13**

The Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) launched a series of gifts and cards to celebrate the winter solstice, but also aimed at mocking Christmas. Cards include designs such as "Keep Saturn in Saturnalia" and "Yes Virginia ...There Is No God." FFRF also offers a "Heathen's Greeting" musical selection.

FFRF's president said "people have been celebrating the winter solstice long before Christmas. We see Christianity as the intruder, trying to steal the natural holiday from all of us humans."

### **November 14**

**College Park, GA** – Students at the Main Street Academy, a charter school, were given permission slips to begin rehearsing "popular American holiday music." The permission slip also stated "religious songs will not be included." The principal did not respond to numerous attempts by the media to ask him to explain his decision.

### **November 15**

**West Columbia, SC** – The American Humanist Association threatened to sue the East Point Academy charter school over its annual Christmas toy drive. The American Humanist Association says that the toy drive violated the constitution, "because the purpose and effect of Operation Christmas Child



is to induce impoverished children to convert to Christianity.” The school cancelled the toy drive because it did not have the funds to fight a legal battle.

### **November 16**

**Avon Park, FL** – Businesses were asked to decorate more than 40 Christmas trees that lined Main Street in advance of the city’s annual Christmas parade. The flier for the event said that trees must be “tastefully decorated” with “no religious decorations.” A standing-room-only crowd turned out for the next City Council meeting and the ban on religious decorations was reversed before anyone needed to speak.

### **November 21**

**Highlands Ranch, CO** – The American Humanist Association threatened to sue the Skyview Academy charter school over a student organized and student run Christmas toy drive to help needy children. The American Humanist Association says that the toy drive violated the constitution because it was sponsored by an evangelical Christian organization. While the school officially canceled the drive, concerned parents and students continued to collect toys and packaged them on the sidewalk in front of the school.

### **November 21**

**Rock Hill, SC** – Fearing a lawsuit from the ACLU or other similar groups, the principal at York Preparatory Academy supported a decision made by the band director to ban all religious music from their upcoming concert. The ban even included instrumental versions of “Joy to the World” and “O Come All Ye Faithful.” After being contacted by the Alliance Defending Freedom, which offered to represent the school against any lawsuit free of charge, the school reversed its policy and permitted the inclusion of the religious music in the concert.

### **November 23 – 24**

**Seattle, WA** – All nine Christmas trees at the Seattle-Tacoma

International Airport were removed after a Rabbi threatened a lawsuit if a menorah was not displayed too. Officials at the airport decided that it would be easier to remove the trees.

### **November 26**

**Reno, NV** – The city announced it would celebrate the lighting of their “holiday tree.” Reno Creative Services Manager, Sharon Spangler, stated “we really want to be respectful of everyone’s beliefs and their forms of celebration.”

### **November 29**

**Louisville, KY** – A teacher at Brandeis Elementary School was asked to take down a paper Christmas tree made up of paper hands cut out to represent all the students. Above the tree was a caption that read “Santa’s Helpers.” The school principal ordered the caption to be removed after another teacher, who was Jewish, complained about it. After the teacher removed the entire display, it was pointed out that removing Christmas entirely counteracted the goal of being “multi-cultural.” The teacher was then permitted to repost the display with a new caption that read “Happy Holidays.”

### **December**

“Judith Owen & Harry Shearer’s Holiday Sing Along” kicked off its irreverent five city tour through New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and New Orleans. The show is described as an “antidote to the holiday frenzy” and according to reports includes songs such as “F\*\*\* Christmas” “Christmas with the Devil” and “Jesus was a Dreidel Spinner.”

### **December**

**Arlington Heights, IL** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation installed an anti-religion sign in a public park as a protest against a privately funded nativity that was on display in the park.

### **December**

**Claremont, CA** – The Claremont United Methodist Church, known

for using the Holy Family to make provocative social commentaries, installed a nativity scene that replaced the baby Jesus with a bleeding Trayvon Martin figure. Martin, the African American teen who was shot in Florida, was depicted sitting hunched over in place of the manger with blood dripping from his chest. This was the sixth year that the church has allowed local artist John Zachary to use the nativity to comment on social policy.

## **December**

**Somers, NY** – A group of residents petitioned the Town Board against a plan to install a crèche in front of the Town House. The Town House's front lawn has long been the site of a Christmas Tree and a Hanukkah menorah but the petition suggests these are "non-religious" symbols.

## **December**

**Tallahassee, FL** – A nativity scene in the State Capitol has been the source of protest from several atheists. The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) placed a banner in the capitol building, which is self described as a "light-hearted nativity scene parody." The banner depicts Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and the Statue of Liberty huddled around a manger with the Bill of Rights in it. FFRF calls the display the "Bill of Rights Nativity."

Additionally, Chaz Stevens, an atheist from Deerfield Beach, FL received permission to install a "Festivus" pole in the capitol to celebrate the fictional holiday made up by the television show "Seinfeld." Stevens' pole was 6 feet tall made up of empty beer cans and was displayed next to the nativity. Stevens admits the idea is ridiculous, but installed the display as a protest against the nativity. Stevens had installed a similar pole in his hometown last year, which led to a ban on any holiday display.

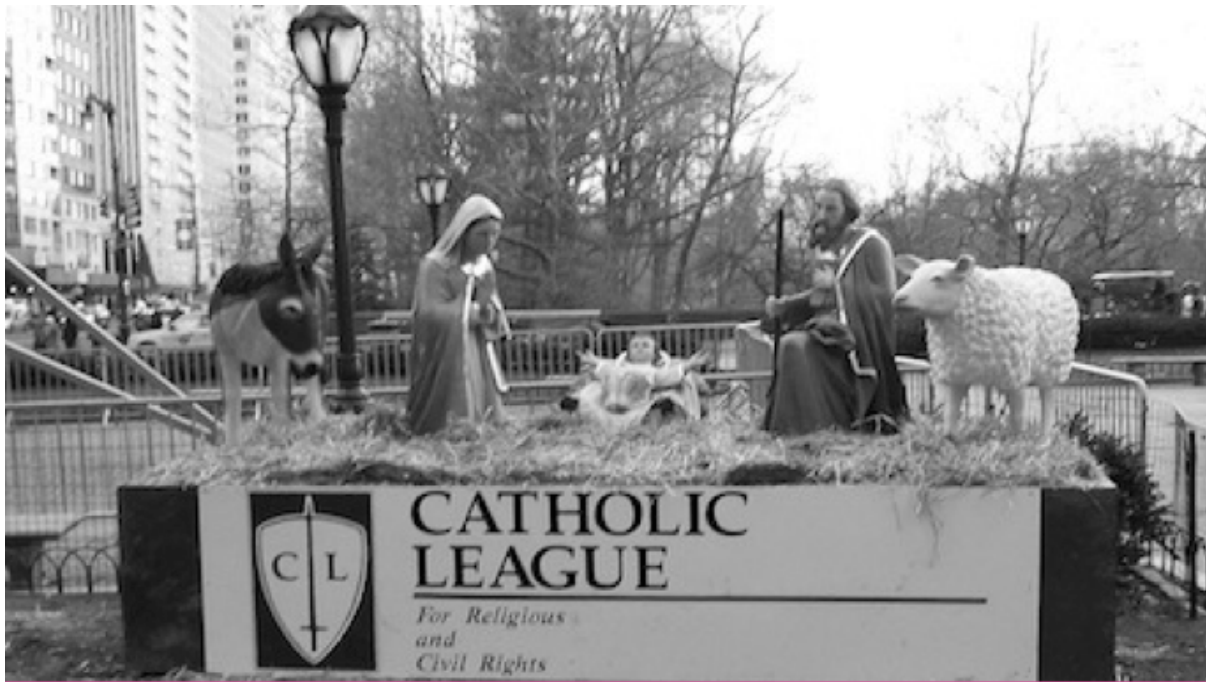
The displays in the Statehouse also included a "provHerb" from the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster meant to mock



Christians. A proposed diorama from The Satanic Temple was rejected because it was “grossly offensive.”

## **December 2**

**Buffalo, NY** – Business owners were ordered to remove Christmas lights that had been placed in trees along the popular Elmwood Village shopping district. According to the city, the lights were illegal unless they had been installed by a licensed contractor and had a \$1 million insurance policy.



*The Catholic League's nativity scene in Central Park.*

## **December 3**

**Brooklet, GA** – For as long as anyone can remember, teachers at Brooklet Elementary School have posted Christmas cards in the hallways outside their classrooms – until this year. When students returned from Thanksgiving break, they discovered that their teachers' Christmas cards had been removed – under orders from the Georgia school's administration. The Christmas card censorship took place as the Bulloch County Board of Education began to crack down on religious expression in their schools. Teachers were ordered to remove any religious icons or items from their classrooms – ranging from Bibles to Christian music.

### **December 3**

**New York, NY** – American Atheists launched a campaign titled “Nobody Needs Christ at Christmas.” The ad campaign includes a series of electronic billboards across midtown Manhattan that cross out the word “Christ” and encourage people to “Celebrate the true meaning of Xmas.” The advertisement then flashes several suggestions for celebrating including “Chinese food,” “Rockettes” and “parties.”

### **December 3**

**Providence, RI** – After two years of lighting a “holiday tree,” Gov. Lincoln Chafee agreed to refer to the State Capitol’s annual lighting celebration as a “Christmas Tree.” However, Gov. Chafee was not available to attend the actual lighting event and instead delegated the Christmas tree lighting responsibilities to the Secretary of State.

### **December 5**

**Chicago, IL** – The Freedom from Religion Foundation unveiled a large illuminated “A” for atheists in the city’s Daley Plaza. The plaza has long been home to a privately maintained crèche and menorah. The atheists’ display also included a banner meant to mock Christians by depicting the Founding Fathers standing around a crib that contained the Bill of Rights.

### **December 5**

**Frisco, TX** – Students who attend Nichols Elementary School’s “Winter Party” have been banned from talking about Christmas or any other religious holiday. Christmas trees have also been banned along with traditional holiday colors – red and green. The principal defended the policy saying that she “didn’t want to offend any families.”

### **December 5**

**Nashville, TN** – Two shoppers were asked to leave the Opry Mills Mall because they were dressed in Christmas costumes and wishing people a Merry Christmas. Mall security indicated that they were interfering with the mall Santa and asked them to

leave. A mall spokesperson later apologized and invited the shoppers back.

#### **December 5**

**Quincy, MA** – Statues of Jesus, Mary, Joseph and a lamb were stolen from a nativity scene in Quincy Square. The statues of the Holy Family were later recovered but the lamb was still missing.

#### **December 5**

**St. Joseph, MN** – Several figures from the nativity scene outside the Church of St. Joseph were stolen. Originally just a shepherd was missing, but then thieves also stole Mary, Joseph and some of the animals. During the following week, on December 11, Mary, Joseph, the shepherd and some of the missing animals were returned.

#### **December 6**

**Ellsworth, ME** – The Downeast Humanists and Freethinkers sponsored a float in the town's Christmas parade. They claim the purpose of the float was to educate parade goers about the pagan roots of the evergreen tree.

#### **December 9**

**Mt. Pleasant, PA** – The baby Jesus figure was stolen from two nativity scenes.

#### **December 10**

**Sumter, SC** – Shaw Air Force Base removed a nativity scene that was displayed on the base after being contacted by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). MRFF bragged that it took the Air Force only 2 hours and 15 minutes to remove the nativity after a complaint had been filed. Officials at the base later revealed that they had not received any complaints about the nativity from Airmen stationed at the base, and that the only complaint was from MRFF. The nativity was later reinstalled outside the Base's chapel.

### **December 10**

**Valencia, CA** – A baby Jesus figurine was stolen from the nativity scene outside the Westfield Valencia Town Center. The statue was returned later in the week.

### **December 11**

**Vancouver, WA** – Children singing Christmas carols were booted from the front of a WinCo grocery store over fears that they might offend patrons who did not celebrate Christmas. A corporate official later said he “did not see any harm” in the girls singing, and granted them permission to return.

### **December 12**

**Kings Park, NY** – Officials at the Ralph J. Osgood Intermediate School decided that 5th grade students would perform “Silent Night” during the school’s concert. However all religious references were removed from the song, resulting in the children singing a version of “Silent Night” that omitted lyrics such as “Holy infant,” “Christ the Savior,” and “Jesus Lord at thy birth.” The school district has since apologized.

### **December 13**

**West Covina, CA** – A 6 year old student brought candy canes with short messages attached that included a reference to Jesus Christ to Merced Elementary School as gifts for his teacher and first grade classmates. The teacher confiscated the candy canes, and after conferring with the principal told the student that “Jesus is not allowed in school.” The messages were ripped off the candy canes and discarded in the trash.



This digital billboard was placed in two locations in New Jersey; one was on Route 18 at the Route 527 Intersection, and the other was on I-95 in South Brunswick, between exits 9 and 8A, heading south.

After a lawyer from Advocates for Faith & Freedom contacted the school on the student's behalf, he was permitted to hand out the candy canes with the messages, but it had to be done off campus and on the last day before the students left for winter break. The school superintendent said the teacher's intention was to "maintain an appropriate degree of religious neutrality in the classroom."

### **December 17**

**Fairfield, CT** – When students at Fairfield Ludlowe High School suggested using Santa and Christmas trees to decorate the classroom door as part of a school-wide contest, the teacher told them that no reference to Christmas would be permitted. The school's headmaster said the school policy is decorations "should have no direct religious meaning." The headmaster suggested using a wreath, candy canes or holly because they have no direct religious meaning.

### **December 17**

**Pitman, NJ** – The Freedom from Religion Foundation rented a billboard that reads "Keep Saturn in Saturnalia," a reference to an ancient celebration of the Roman God Saturn. This billboard was erected in protest to a Knights of Columbus banner that read "Keep Christ in Christmas."

## **December 19**

**Guantanamo Bay, Cuba** – Two nativity scenes were removed from dining halls at the U.S. Naval base following a complaint from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). According to MRFF, they received an email signed by 18 active-duty service members protesting the crèches. A spokesperson for the base said there had been no complaints from personnel stationed at the base about the displays. The nativity scenes were moved to a courtyard outside the base chapel.

## **December 19**

**Temecula, CA** – First grade students at the Temecula Valley Unified School District were given an assignment that required each student to bring in something that represented a family holiday for a one-minute presentation. One young student brought in a star of Bethlehem and began to recite a Bible verse, when her teacher interrupted her and told her to take a seat. The student was reportedly told that “she’s not allowed to talk about the Bible in school.”

## **December 21**

**Lincoln, NE** – A lighted baby Jesus figure was stolen from the front yard of a private home.

## **December 24**

**Augusta, GA** – A group of high school students were banned from singing religious Christmas carols at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center. The hospital, which is run by the federal Veterans Administration, said it had a responsibility to “represent people of all faiths.” According to the hospital, the policy on “spiritual care” is set by the Veterans Administration to protect veterans from “unwelcome religious material.” The students who had performed without any problems in 2011 and 2012 were given a list of 12 approved secular Christmas songs that they could sing. The students did not have enough time to rehearse the approved songs and instead decided not to perform at all.



## **December 24**

**Dallas, TX** – Christmas cards that were made by students for local veterans were not accepted by the VA North Texas Health Care System because the federal Veterans Administration has a policy that limits the distribution of cards containing religious references. The cards were instead donated to other private veterans' facilities.

## **December 25**

**Erie, PA** – Someone broke into a church after Christmas Eve services and stole the baby Jesus statue from the church's narthex. Nothing else in the church was stolen or damaged.

## **December 27**

**Basking Ridge, NJ** – A statue of baby Jesus was stolen from a nativity scene on the front lawn of a private home.

**[Back to Top](#)**