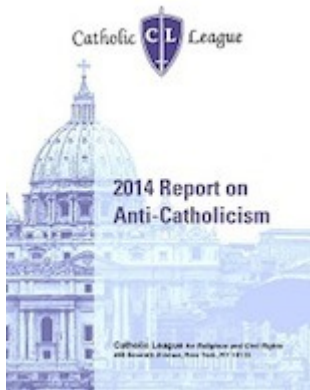


# WAR ON CHRISTMAS



*The annual "War on Christmas" continued in 2014 with both sides having achieved roughly the same number of wins and losses. This is certainly an improvement over the days when the anti-Christmas side appeared to be winning this battle in the culture war. The good news is that the pro-Christmas side has been pushing back, even reversing previous losses.*

*The presence of the Catholic League was felt in New York City where a record number of people commented on our nativity scene in Central Park; this year it was displayed right in front of the Plaza Hotel.*

*When it comes to putting a nativity scene on public property, the pro-Christmas activists claimed several victories, despite the fact that almost all of them were challenged by the anti-Christmas forces. They too had their victories, succeeding in getting some displays removed.*

*Freedom from Religion Foundation was active in many of the attacks, as were American Atheists, the ACLU, and Americans United for Separation of Church and State; the latter advised Satanists of their rights, thus proving that their real agenda is to attack Christianity. American Atheists erected anti-Christmas billboards in some cities, mocking the holiday.*

*Most atheists either celebrate Christmas in a secular fashion, or are wholly dismissive of it; few are terrified of it. American Atheist President David Silverman showed his hand when he said "Millions of American children are forced to go to church under the threat of being denied meals, losing household privileges, having their college tuition cut off, or being kicked out of their homes. Many atheists are forced to go to church under threat of divorce or lose custody of their*

*children." It is this mindset which shows the true goal of these activists, not just to censor Christmas, but to attack those who celebrate it.*

*The Catholic League made a splash in Los Angeles with its billboard: we called attention to hate speech directed at Christians at home and abroad. From the media response, we know we provoked a discussion.*

*We also drew attention to the extent that militant secularists are terrified about Christmas. For example, their censorial response reached absurd heights when some sought to ban candy canes. That was the initial response of the University of Maine; it changed its policy once the media exposed its madness. Why did it seek to censor candy canes? Because, they said, the candy canes reminded people of Christmas. Evidently, that is not something that an institution of higher learning should be expected to tolerate.*

*Cambridge, Massachusetts, we pointed out, wouldn't blink an eye about welcoming terrorists to speak at any venue, but when it came to having Santa appear at a local school winter concert, the open-minded bigots decided to disinvite him.*

*It never ceases to amaze us that all of those seeking to silence the Christian voice at Christmastime boast of their unwavering commitment to freedom of speech, diversity, and tolerance. Their real political stripes are totalitarian; they are a menace to freedom. But the good news is that they keep running up against people like us.*

#### **September 9 – October 14**

**Marshfield, MA** – On September 9 the School Committee of the Marshfield School District voted 3-2 to change the name of the annual December break to "Holiday Break" from its original designation of "Christmas Vacation." The matter was considered because one parent complained to the superintendent that using Christmas was "slightly archaic."

Outraged residents and parents collected over 400 signatures and launched a campaign to convince the School Committee to change the name back. On October 14 the committee considered a motion to restore "Christmas Vacation" to the calendar, but it too was defeated 3-2.

#### **November 24**

**Rusk, TX** – The American Humanist Association sent a letter to Cherokee County officials objecting to the placement of a nativity scene on the lawn outside the county courthouse. Texas State Attorney General Greg Abbott expressed his support for, and legal assistance in defending the display.

#### **November 25**

**Piedmont, AL** – The theme of the city's annual Christmas parade was "Let's Keep Christ in Christmas" until the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) sent officials a letter claiming that the theme "alienates non-Christians." City officials responded to FFRF the following day that the theme had been changed to simply the "City of Piedmont Christmas Parade."

#### **December**

**Tallahassee, FL** – The Florida Department of Management Services approved a number of displays for the State Capitol, some of which are meant to mock Christians and Christmas. A pro-Christmas group would be erecting a nativity; the Satanic Temple, who was being represented by Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, was approved for a falling angel display; American Atheists displayed a placard mocking the true meaning of "X-mas" including friends, fun and Chinese food; local blogger and activist Chaz Stevens displayed a pole made out of beer cans for the fictional holiday Festivus; and the Freedom From Religion Foundation once again displayed its secular Winter Solstice banner in the capitol. The banner included a "bill of rights nativity" scene.

#### **December**

American Atheists launched a series of billboards in St.

Louis, Milwaukee and Ft. Smith, Arkansas. The billboards featured an image of a young girl and her letter to Santa. It read, "Dear Santa, All I want for Christmas is to skip Church! I'm too old for fairy tales."

## **December 2**

**Madison, WI** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) installed a "Natural Nativity Scene" in the Wisconsin state capitol. The display, which is meant to mock Christmas, celebrates the rebirth of the sun and includes Charles Darwin, Thomas Jefferson, Emma Goldman and the Statue of Liberty. Jesus is represented by a female doll and Mary by Venus. FFRF also installed a Winter Solstice sign imploring readers to "Keep State and Church Separate."

## **December 4**

**Columbia, TN** – Maury County's Commissioners voted not to install a nativity on their courthouse lawn this year. The county attorney and local mayor both warned the commissioners against approving the display citing the likelihood of lawsuits.

## **December 4**

**Coral Gables, FL** – Vandals sprayed statues of Mary and Joseph with blue and yellow paint and stole the statue of baby Jesus from the nativity scene outside an office building. Police recovered the missing statue on December 6 and returned it to the business owner. The Jesus statue is valued at \$2500.

## **December 4**

**Portsmouth, NH** – The ACLU objected to the decision made by Sheriff Bill Watson to display Christmas trees, a nativity scene and a menorah inside the city's courthouse. Sheriff Watson spent his own money to buy three trees for display at each entrance to the courthouse, as well as a nativity set and a menorah that were displayed inside the sheriff's office. City policy prohibits religious displays and the ACLU protested the inclusion of the religious symbols. As a result,

the city's chief judge asked Watson to voluntarily remove the religious displays. Watson, who initially rebuked the ACLU, complied with the judge's request in order to avoid a legal directive.

## HOLLYWOOD BILLBOARD



The Catholic League's West-Coast Christmas billboard was on display from December 1 through December 28. It was mounted on Pico Blvd, just west of Fairfax Avenue, one of the most heavily traveled East-West arteries in Los Angeles.

The message speaks for itself. No, the Hollywood mogals who disrespect Christians are not the same as radical Muslims who behead us, but both are full of hate.

### December 4

**Rockaway Township, NJ** – The baby Jesus figures were stolen from two nativity scenes on the lawns of private homes. Both figurines were taken after 9 p.m. from the houses that were 3 miles apart. Police were investigating whether the same person was responsible for both thefts. One of the figures was later recovered.

### December 5

American Atheists unveiled billboards in Memphis and Nashville, TN that targeted Christians. The atheists admit that their billboard was aimed at "in-the-closet atheists who are pressured to observe religious traditions during the

holidays.”

#### **December 5**

***Mountain Home, AR*** – The American Humanist Association complained that a crèche on the lawn of the Baxter County Courthouse violated the First Amendment. The display also included a 10-foot Christmas tree, Santa Claus, and a reindeer. It had been installed for over 30 years. After complaints were made in 2013, the county included a sign with a disclaimer that the display was privately funded.

#### **December 6**

***Killen, TX*** – Vandals struck the home of a disabled veteran who displayed dozens of inflatable Christmas decorations as well as over 1900 lights and other decorations. The inflatable decorations were slashed and wires were cut. Over \$800 in damage was inflicted.

#### **December 7**

The season finale of “Family Guy” on Fox, was titled “The 2000 Year-Old Virgin,” and featured the characters meeting Jesus in a mall. Jesus discloses that he does not have a good relationship with his father, God. God spends Christmas at a time-share with a girl-friend, which leaves Jesus home alone for his birthday.

The characters learn that Jesus is a virgin and does not know anything about sex. They embark on a mission to find Jesus a girlfriend for his birthday. The remainder of the episode mocks Jesus, Christians and the Christmas story.

#### **December 7**

***Franklin, IN*** – A two-foot statue of Jesus was removed from the nativity at the Indiana Masonic Home. The retirement community moved the nativity to a more prominent location this year so that it would be visible to passing traffic. The missing statue was later found elsewhere on the property.

#### **December 9**

**North Augusta, SC** – A nativity display was removed from the Nancy Carson Library. After the library received complaints, including from the County Council, the nativity was returned as part of a display that included other religious and non-religious symbols.

#### **December 11**

**Jay City, FL** – After receiving a letter from the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), the Jay City attorney advised against installing a crèche at city hall. FFRF claimed the display would be illegal and the city feared incurring legal costs defending the crèche. Instead the city gave the crèche to a private organization to display.

#### **December 11**

**North Ogden, UT** – A complaint was filed by a local resident against a nativity that was set up in front of the city's offices. Additionally a Facebook page for the city's mayor became a forum for debate between those residents who wanted the display and those that did not. A spokesperson for the Utah chapter of the ACLU said the city needed to install secular symbols such as reindeer or candy canes next to the nativity. The mayor supported keeping the nativity.

#### **December 12**

**Cambridge, MA** – Santa Claus was disinvited from his traditional appearance at the winter concert at Andrew Peabody School because one parent complained. The annual concert for first through fourth grade students would normally include a visit from Santa. The school describes itself as an "inclusive community" and said Santa would make an appearance at a different event for families at the school. That event was not part of the school day and attendance was optional.

#### **December 12**

**Grand Haven, MI** – Americans United for the Separation of Church and State threatened to sue the city over the installation of a nativity scene on city owned Dewey Hill. The

location is already subject to controversy because of a cross on the property.

*Note: See the Activists section for more information about those protesting the cross.*

### **December 12**

**Utica, NY** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter to the Utica Fire Department demanding that a “Happy Birthday Jesus – We Love You” sign be removed from outside fire station 4. The handmade sign was installed outside the station by the local chief.

### **December 13**

**Dallas, NC** – After being threatened with a lawsuit from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the town decided to remove a nativity from town property. The nativity had been placed outside the courthouse every Christmas for 40 years.

### **December 15**

**Lansing, MI** – The Satanic Temple was approved for a display outside the state capitol. According to Capitol rules the display had to be removed each night. The display was meant to counter a nativity scene which was installed later in the month.



## CENTRAL PARK NATIVITY SCENE



The Catholic League's annual nativity scene in New York City's Central Park was erected in a spot just south of the Park: It was on 5th Avenue, between 58th and 59th Street, in front of the Plaza Hotel.

### December 15

**Orono, ME** – An administrator at the University of Maine, Auxiliary Services Executive Director Daniel Stirrup, emailed other employees advising them not to display any “decoration that could be perceived as religious” including “xmas trees, wreaths, xmas presents, candy canes, etc.” The email continued that “plain trees without presents underneath, decorative lights, but not on trees, snow flakes, etc.” were allowed.

Once students complained and the local media covered the story, the school’s Dean of Students issued a statement revoking the earlier policy and stating “we welcome every faith tradition, and we welcome displays of those faith traditions.”

### December 16

**Brookville, IN** – The ACLU filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation against a nativity scene that was on display outside the Franklin County Courthouse. The display was paid for with private donations.

## **December 16**

**Chicago, IL** – A series of 11 billboards were installed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation. The advertisements featured members of the group with quotes meant to mock people of faith. That the billboards were installed shortly before Christmas showed they were targeting Christians.

## **December 18**

**Lincoln, NE** – An application by the Thomas More Society to install a crèche in the Nebraska state capitol was approved, but not without controversy. However a state senator, Ernie Chambers, protested the decision to grant the group permission. "Except for the fact that I am a man who believes in using legal processes to address inappropriate use of state facilities, I would dismantle it and remove it myself" Sen. Chambers said.

## **December 21**

**Lockhart, SC** – A vandal slashed inflatable Christmas decorations at two homes.

## **December 22**

**Louisville, KY** – At least 25 homes were vandalized when a group of teenagers went around breaking Christmas decorations, stealing lights and slashing air-filled displays.

## **December 22**

**Statesboro, GA** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation set up a freethought solstice banner to counter the nativity outside the Bulloch County Courthouse. The banner said there is no God and that religion is a myth.

## **December 24 – 25**

American Atheists' internet based television channel, AtheistTV, promised "original programs proclaiming the truth about Christmas." The scheduled programs included a de-bunking of Christmas, anti-Christmas shows, and a selection titled "Is Christmas a Religious Holiday?"

## **December 25**

**Haverhill, MA** – When a priest arrived at Sacred Heart Parish to celebrate Christmas Mass he noticed the baby Jesus figure was missing from the church's nativity scene. Upon closer inspection he discovered that the infant was replaced with a severed pig's head.

Police arrested a suspect and charged her with destruction of a place of worship. The same homeless woman also vandalized the nativity on December 31 when she stole a large metal crucifix from the crèche.