

WEST PALM BEACH VA MEDICAL CENTER RESTORES MENORAH BUT STILL DOESN'T HAVE A NATIVITY SCENE

On December 7, menorahs were removed from the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in West Palm Beach. On December 10, they were restored. The initial complaints were made by those who contended that the menorah is a religious symbol and should therefore not be displayed on government property. The second round of complaints came from the Jewish War Veterans. Even though they won, some are still upset because they say the display of menorahs should not have to be conditioned upon their placement next to a Christmas tree.

Bruce Rogow, a Nova Southeastern University law professor, is quoted today as saying that the problem could be resolved by banning all holiday displays. He also said the courts have determined that the Christmas tree and menorah have been transformed into secular symbols. In reference to the 1989 Allegheny decision, he added that the U.S. Supreme Court held that a nativity scene had to be removed because it was placed on the steps of the Allegheny County Courthouse and therefore had the appearance of government endorsement; he added that the high court ruled that placing a menorah next to a Christmas tree resolved the issue by representing both holidays with secular displays.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"The situation in West Palm Beach couldn't be outdone by *Saturday Night Live*. First of all, the high court ruled in the Allegheny decision that the menorah is a religious

symbol. The reason they allowed it to stay on government property is because it was placed next to a secular symbol, the Christmas tree. The nativity scene had to go because it was not placed next to secular symbols. Therefore, if the VA Hospital is going to allow menorahs, it should also allow nativity scenes. We are calling on the Catholic War Veterans to press this case. Finally, there are two ways the government can be neutral: by being intolerant and banning all religious symbols or by being tolerant and allowing all of them. Unlike professor Rogow, we opt for the latter."