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Fighting for Secularism in Minnesota

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Fighting for Secularism in Minnesota

FFRF Staff Attorney Ryan Jayne will discuss some of the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s recent efforts in defending the Establishment Clause, and also dive into 2020 Minnesota legislation pertaining to religious intrusion into public policy. He will also give a refresher on historical legal challenges to the Establishment Clause, and a glimpse into likely challenges in the near future. Ryan will make himself available for a Q&A session following his presentation.

Ryan Jayne received a B.A. in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Honors College in 2007. After graduating, Ryan taught piano and chess lessons while working as a financial advisor until 2012, when he began law school at Lewis & Clark in Portland, Oregon. In law school he focused on intellectual property and animal law, serving as an associate editor for the Animal Law Review at Lewis & Clark and co-founding the Pacific Northwest’s first Secular Legal Society. Ryan graduated cum laude in 2015, began working with FFRF in January of 2015, and became a Diane Uhl Legal Fellow in September, 2015, specialising in faith-based government funding. Ryan became an FFRF staff attorney in September, 2017. Ryan manages FFRF’s legislative efforts across the country and plays an active role in FFRF’s “rapid response” team, defending against threats to the separation between state and church as they happen.
NOW is an especially good
time to join the Freedom
From Religion Foundation!

Their semi-annual convention, November 19-21 will be virtual and free to members.

FFRF is the largest atheist, freethought organization in the world and Lake Superior Freethinkers is a chapter of it. They do national legal and other actions that we as a local group can not do. See the link below for convention activities.


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Join us for virtual Happy Hour
from 4:00-6:00 pm Thursday, November 5th via Zoom

Upcoming LSF Speakers

Fred Friedman
DECEMBER 6, 2020

David Swenson
JANUARY 3, 2021

Remove Jesus image, FFRF asks La. police dept.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is requesting that the Shreveport, La., police department take down a painting depicting Jesus.

A concerned community member has contacted the state/church watchdog to report that a portrait of Christianity’s messiah is prominently displayed in a police department hallway where members of the public wait to be interviewed by police officers. FFRF has also been informed about a series of poems titled “My Story of Jesus” that have been posted in common workspaces.

The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits government endorsement of religion, FFRF emphasizes to the Shreveport Police Department.

“The Supreme Court has said time and again, that the “First Amendment mandates government neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion.” FFRF Legal Fellow Brendan Johnson writes to Shreveport Police Chief Ben Raymond. “It is inappropriate for the department to display this religious content because it conveys government support for religion.”

Like the Ten Commandments posting in county buildings in McCreary and the crèche display on county land in Allegheny, this display is unconstitutional under the precedent of Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971), FFRF asserts. Any reasonable observer would view the display as an endorsement of religion by the department.

In 2013, FFRF successfully sued to remove a painting of Jesus from an Ohio middle school, with parties agreeing to a financial settlement requiring the school to pay the plaintiffs a combination of damages and legal fees totaling $95,000.

Such displays also convey a message to non-Christians that they are “outsiders, not full members of the political community and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community,” to quote the Supreme Court. The Shreveport Police Department serves all citizens regardless of their personal religious beliefs. Neither the portrait of Jesus nor the poetry relate to legitimate government business and both send a divisive message to many citizens, including the 26 percent of American adults who identify as nonreligious.

To avoid further Establishment Clause concerns, FFRF is asking the Shreveport Police Department that the portrait and poems be immediately removed.