

SECULAR COLORADO

Hub | HOC | BA | FFRF | SA | SVC | AU | JH



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Winter Solstice Party

Saturday, December 17, 6:00 PM, Secular Hub

Every year our local secular groups hold a Winter Solstice party at the Secular Hub. This year the festivities will be a little early, on Saturday, December 17th - that's coming up soon!

Please bring a dish to share: hot dish, salad, dessert or something you love to make! Non-alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase.

The Humanists of Colorado will as usual carry out two of their holiday traditions: a book exchange and a sharing of quotes, with this year's quote topic "Disappointment". Gee, where did that topic come from?

This is the big party of the season, be there!

JEFFERSON HUMANISTS

Jefferson Humanists Happenings in December

Annual Holiday Dinner Party, Saturday, December 10, 2016

It was a wonderful magical Holiday Party with around 60 fellow Jefferson Humanists and guests. Our former prized chefs, Mari Cowley and John Roesch cooked up a fantastic holiday feast. Wine was served for a small donation. There was a special treat of live music performed by an amazing group singing secular holiday songs. Everyone was welcomed to sing along. A merry time was had by all.

JH Action Task Force – Organizational meeting

The first session was on Monday, December 5th at Panera Bread in Lakewood. The event was chaired by Ralph Hughes (Ralph.Hughes@Yahoo.com). It was a brainstorming effort to throw out ideas and try to define what this program is going to focus on. So far, the main interest seems to be political and how to survive the Trump era. The initial proposal follows.

Given that many of us were upset by the election (if not its outcome, then at least its tone), taking action to avoid the worst from happening during the next administration might serve as badly needed recovery therapy. To that end, the officers of the Jefferson Humanists are asking members to form a “tangible action task force” (or “legislative subcommittee” in official parlance).

The environment, international treaties, reproductive rights and civil liberties are all threatened by the incoming administration. The mission of this committee will be to make a difference in the future by connecting with other humanists and applying our collective persuasive power upon elected representatives to minimize harmful changes to these, and other, important policy issues.

An effective plan includes

- a) getting our policy preferences informed and ready to share,
- b) finding others who subscribe to any or all of those preferences and
- c) collaborating with other groups to amplify our impact.

At the organizational meetings, we will formulate both short and mid-term plans and look at the types of actions we can take to make our voices heard.

FROG Book Discussion Meeting - A Man without a Country by Kurt Vonnegut

The Jefferson Humanists' book group, FROG (Freethinkers Reading Opportunity Group), discussed the December book: A Man without a Country by Kurt Vonnegut (Award winning author, AHA Humanist of the Year in 1992 and Honorary President of the AHA from 1992 until his death in 2007).

Subtitled, A memoir of life in George W. Bush's America, Vonnegut's book is a collection of short essays with topics from the importance of humor to the problems of technology to the differences between men and women. He also tackles politics and modern American society, often from a humanistic perspective.

JEFFERSON HUMANISTS

Jefferson Humanists Happenings in December

Monthly Dinner Social

Infinitus PIE in Wheat Ridge

Wednesday, December 21, 2016, 7:00 PM

5807 W. 38th Ave, Wheat Ridge, CO. Two blocks East of Harlan on 38th Ave., North side, between Wadsworth and Sheridan. Banner on the building says "Craft Pizza Craft Beer".

Join your fellow Humanists and freethinkers for dinner and socializing at Infinitus PIE, a newly discovered gem. It's a pizza place where each diner gets their own personal pizza with whatever they want on it, thus the name Infinitus. They are giving us a deal of unlimited toppings personal pizzas for \$7. They also have salads and other offerings, with a nice selection of hand-crafted beers on tap, along with wine. With 15 or more persons we get extra special deals.

This place has something for everyone at a reasonable price, and is kid-friendly. To learn more go to infinituspie.com. They also help local nonprofits with fundraising events.

Because Infinitus is such a great place, we are going to make it the home of this event for a while. So, here is a regular social event you can count on. For the time being, every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm we'll meet at Infinitus PIE. Look for the Jefferson Humanists sign at our table.

EVERYONE FROM ALL THE GROUPS ARE INVITED.

Our next monthly meeting will be in January 22. A special speaker from the Museum of Nature and Science is going to give a presentation on evolution and science.

FROG Book Discussion Meetings

January 14th - Topic: Famous Humanists

Read a book about or by a famous humanist (e.g. Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Bertrand Russell, Margaret Atwood, Kurt Vonnegut, etc. For more suggestions, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_secular_humanists

February 11th

The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: And their race to save the world's most precious manuscripts by Joshua Hammer

March 11th – The Blind Watchmaker

Why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design by Richard Dawkins

Contact Matthew Elisha (mrelisha@msn.com) with any questions about the book discussions.

BOULDER ATHEISTS

November Monthly Meeting

Boulder Atheists held their November Monthly Membership Meeting on Sunday, November 28th at the Boulder Public Library.

President Virgil Anderson spoke of the potential religious backlash to our secular country due to the election of Donald Trump as president and his appointment of extreme right wing cabinet members such as Betsy DeVos. Betsy has voiced her desire to use her position as Secretary of Education to "advance the kingdom of God", a blatant violation of the U.S. Constitution.

A one page flyer was distributed with a list of four of the top secular organizations that will fight against any violations to the U.S. Constitution and how to support them by joining or donating to them. At the top of the list was the Freedom From Religion Foundation followed by American Atheists, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The flyer included instructions on how anyone who shops at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) can instead use Amazon Smile to access the same inventory at the same prices but designate any of these organization as the charity of their choice and have .5% of their purchase price donated to that organization at no additional cost to them.

There was also some more encouraging news presented to demonstrate that not all was lost and that some gains were made by the secular community. James Raskin from Maryland's 8th district was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and will be the first openly atheist member of the House. Athena Salman will be an openly atheist member of the Arizona State house from district 26 and Marissa Postler was elected to the Wyoming City, Michigan city council as an atheist. The remainder of the meeting was spent in a very lively discussion on topics ranging from the anticipated effects of the Trump administration to how religion has affected the lives of some of the people in attendance.

Winter Solstice Party

Boulder Atheists will hold their annual Winter Solstice Party on Sunday, December 18th starting at 6:00 PM at BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse, 1690 28th Street in Boulder.

This is an excellent time for current members, new members, potential members and guests to get together in a social setting and get to know each other. There will be an 'all you can eat' buffet that includes pizza, salad and a pasta dish and all non-alcoholic drinks. Beer and mixed drinks will be available from the dedicated servers at the standard menu price.

The price to attend is \$20, but registered dues-paying members and their guests will receive a \$5 discount reducing the cost to \$15. Non-members will also be able to join first in order to receive the \$5 discount. The entry fee will simply be collected upon arrival.



Grief and Loss After a Tumultuous Election

The election occurred just over a month ago and many in the secular community are still reeling from the stunning victory by Donald Trump. One thing is clear, with the balance in the Supreme Court up for grabs, and from the choices this president elect has made for his cabinet posts...many of our constitutional rights and secular values are in jeopardy. Here are just a few examples of the philosophy and previous track records of the individuals nominated as excerpted from FFRF press releases and Secular Coalition for America:

FFRF: Trump's pick for education secretary will destroy public education - See more at: <https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/27989-ffrf-trump-s-pick-for-education-secretary-will-destroy-public-education#sthash.mvzew3bU.dpuf>

Steve Bannon a threat to all we hold dear <https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/27934-steve-bannon-a-threat-to-all-we-hold-dear>

Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) has been selected to serve as Attorney General. He was quoted saying, "If you have secularization in the world and don't believe in a higher being, maybe you don't believe there is any truth" during the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Senator Sessions' legislative record reflects his bias to support religious privilege over fairness and equality.

Rep. Tom Price (R-GA) is the President-elect's choice for Secretary of Health and Human Services. Rep. Price is a fierce opponent of reproductive rights. Price has voted for extreme bans on abortion care and coverage, and vowed to end Obamacare. This nomination is yet another signal that Trump plans to make good on his promise to repeal Obamacare, defund Planned Parenthood, and punish women who have abortions by making the Hyde Amendment permanent.

Grief over a loss of any kind can take many forms. The five **stages**: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with grief and loss. Although we have the loss of the election to a president elect who's inner circle will not support secular values that does not mean we should end with acceptance. We should continue our fight to maintain the wall of separation between our government and religion.

A recent blog post from Andrew Seidel, Staff Attorney at FFRF provides an excellent summation of the situation:

We must rise. We must rise and fight like hell.

"The First Amendment is in danger. The hallowed protector of our secular government, of free speech, of the right to assemble is vulnerable. Perhaps it is more vulnerable now than at any time since the Alien and Sedition Acts or McCarthyism.



— Continued

Theocrats will now control the White House, the House, the Senate, and get to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court, 103 other [federal court vacancies](#) (including 13 at the appeals court level), and, with four years to govern, probably get to fill another Supreme Court seat. That means a six justice pro-religion majority for a generation.

This new landscape poses serious problems. We are facing previously unthinkable policies: that global climate change is [a hoax](#) and that [creationism should be taught](#) to children in public schools. The push to [redefine religious liberty](#), which actually seeks to enshrine [Christian privilege](#), is likely to see big gains. If fulfilled, the [promise](#) to allow churches—which are tax-exempt and have no accountability to the IRS or the people—to endorse political candidates from the pulpit, will destroy an important bulwark on the wall of separation. Media outlets have been [threatened](#) with lawsuits, compromising the freedom of press.

FFRF is preparing for this legislative and judicial onslaught. The fight is going to be difficult. We're going to need your help and your support. We need your voice [to join](#) ours. In his second State of the Union address to Congress, Abraham Lincoln said, "The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. . . . We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country." We will.

Maya Angelou wrote something similar in her poem, "Still I Rise":

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Dark and difficult times [may](#) lie ahead, but know this:
We are going to fight like hell.
We are going to fight like hell to defend the wall of separation.
We are going to fight like hell to protect the First Amendment.
FFRF is going to fight like hell, for you."

[Help us.](#)

I urge you to get up, get out and fight. Find your voice and be a voice for maintaining that wall of separation.

Claudette St.Pierre, Chapter President

Freedom From Religion Foundation Metro Denver Chapter

www.ffrfdenver.org

www.meetup.com/FFRF-Denver/



Report from the FFRF national meeting, October 7 – 9, 2016.

by Becky Greben

I attended the FFRF's national meeting in October as a representative of the Metro Denver Chapter of the FFRF. Unfortunately my colleagues on the Chapter board were unable to attend.

The FFRF is now in its 40th year, having begun as a regional organization in Wisconsin in 1976. The headquarters remain in Madison, WI, headed by co-presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor. Currently the FFRF has about 24,000 members and may be the largest atheist/freethought organization in the U.S. Its main mission is to act as a watchdog and legal advocate in cases anywhere in the U.S. where the wall of separation between religion and government is breached or threatened, and where the individual rights of citizens are violated when religion is imposed or given special privilege in the public sector. (Actions involving private enterprise are more problematic.) Consequently the national office has a full-time legal staff of 5 attorneys and several paralegals who respond to state/church separation issues and complaints.

Therefore, much of the conference covered the status of various legal actions in which the FFRF is involved or has resolved in the past year. This includes anything from compelling kindergarten children in a Georgia public school to pray, to the Texas governor removing a permitted secular display from the Texas capitol steps during last year's Christmas season, to the U.S. Congressional chaplain's office denying Dan Barker's request to perform a secular invocation before Congress. (Yes, there is a Congressional chaplain's office that costs U.S. taxpayers \$800,000 per year to maintain.)

The legal staff is also busy with educational efforts such as:

- Commentary on TV news
- Letters to local and national political leaders on various issues
- RE: Ark Encounter theme park [Ken Hamm project in Kentucky that is openly advertised as an endeavor for Christian advocacy] - FFRF sent letters to public school superintendents in 5 states explaining potential for violation if public school students are sent there on field trips
- Filing Amicus Curiae ("Friend of the Court") briefs in connection with church/state lawsuits in which FFRF is not a party.

Of special note is a parsonage housing cost exemption case that the FFRF won in Federal District Court in Wisconsin a couple of years ago. This challenged the legitimacy of the privilege enjoyed by members of the clergy under the IRS regulations with respect to their personal housing costs. However, this result was reversed in late 2014 by the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals based on the finding that the FFRF lacked "standing" to bring suit. The reasoning was that the FFRF did not suffer a "constitutionally cognizable injury" by the existence of this exemption, and also they were never denied this exemption because they never applied for it. So, at this conference it was announced that Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor had applied for the exemption as the heads of a 501(c)(3) organization, and were denied. The suit is being re-filed.



Report from the FFRF national meeting, , October 7 – 9, 2016.

by Becky Greben

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The main part of the conference lasts just one day, and in addition to the various legal updates there were awards ceremonies and presentations by noted non-believers. The latter included talks by author Susan Jacoby, (e.g., *The Age of American Unreason*), author and University of Chicago biology professor Jerry Coyne (*Why Evolution is True* and *Faith v. Fact*), and physicist and atheist activist Lawrence Krauss whose most recent well-known book is *A Universe from Nothing*.

Awardees included:

Marie Schaub - Pennsylvania mother who protested a 10 Commandments display on the grounds of a local public high school. A lawsuit resulted and, unbelievably, this case has been grinding on for 4 years.

Carter Warden - one of the founders of The Clergy Project who for 8 years had been using only a pseudonym as he was still a practicing pastor, and this day came out with his real name. The Clergy Project was started about 8 years ago as an online forum and support network for members of the clergy who are no longer believers but because of their individual career and social situations are still "in the closet." The Clergy Project is supported by the Richard Dawkins Foundation, FFRF, and private donations.

Lauri Lebo - a local reporter who covered the *Kitzmiller vs. Dover* "intelligent design" court trial which took place in Dover, Pennsylvania 10 years ago. The side of science prevailed after this lengthy trial, and Lebo wrote a book about the case.

Rafida Bonya Ahmed - Rafida was married to Avijit Roy, a Bangladesh-born American citizen who was a scientist, professor and atheist blogger (in the Bengali language). While traveling in Bangladesh in February 2015, Rafida and Avijit were attacked by three Islamic State men wielding machetes. Avijit was killed and Rafida seriously injured, but she is recovering and is speaking out about this experience and in opposition to Islamic extremism. In the past several years in Bangladesh at least 7 or 8 other secular activists and several gay activists have been similarly murdered, with apparent impunity.

Justin Scott - As an atheist activist in Iowa, he more or less "specializes" in asking local politicians about how they might acknowledge and work with the "nones" in their constituencies, and records and blogs about their very revealing responses. At the time of this writing, Justin was slated to be featured soon as a guest on Seth Andrews' *The Thinking Atheist* podcast.

Nadia Duncan - college student winner of FFRF's annual essay contest with an essay titled "An Unapologetic Black Atheist."



Report from the FFRF national meeting, , October 7 – 9, 2016.

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— Continued —

In connection with the problems being encountered by secular activists in Bangladesh, the FFRF started a new 501(c)(3) organization called “Nonbelief Relief,” designed to raise funds to get some of these activists out of Bangladesh and to other countries for safe harbor. It is also looking into similar situations in countries such as Egypt and Malaysia. In keeping with their constant battle against the special privilege given to churches by the Tax Code, the FFRF plans to complete the standard annual non-profit tax Form 990 on behalf of Nonbelief Relief, but NOT FILE IT with the I.R.S. in 2017. It will instead be posted on the FFRF website. This is to protest the fact that religious 501(c)(3) organizations are exempt from filing such form with the I.R.S., and thus are never held accountable for their receipt and use of funds.

The conference in general was a celebration of many of the FFRF’s and others’ successful efforts in the past year but also recognition of the many challenges ahead. It should be observed however that the conference occurred a month before the November election, and at that time the presumed election outcome was going to be, well, different. This of course would also have meant a different future for the Supreme Court, a concern which looms very large in the FFRF’s work on church/state separation issues.

Further, the president-elect has pledged to repeal the “Johnson Amendment” provision of the I.R.S. Code. This 1954 change to section 501(c)(3) states that entities who are exempt from federal income tax cannot participate or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of - or in opposition to - any candidate for public office. Repeal of this amendment would allow churches, and also presumably other 501(c)(3) entities, to openly endorse political candidates and contribute funds to those campaigns.

Had this FFRF conference taken place after November 8, the topics and focus may have been very different. We’ll see what it looks like in September 2017 when the next FFRF annual meeting will be held in Madison.

The MetroDenver Chapter of the FFRF functions as a local ‘watchdog’ arm of the national organization. Local membership is available for a nominal annual fee and options to join the national FFRF are also available. A membership application form is available on our webpage, www.ffrfdenver.org. More information may be obtained by contacting ffrfdenver@gmail.com.

SECULAR COLORADO

Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Monday, December 12

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, December 13

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

5:30 PM (Hub) Newbie Night

Thursday, December 15

12:30 PM (BA) Weekly Lunch Social at 3 Margaritas, 28th and Iris, Boulder

4:00 PM (BA) Afternoon Coffee at Red Rock Coffeehouse, Boulder

6:30 PM (Hub) Movie Night: "Bob Roberts" at 7 on the big screen at the Hub

Friday, December 16

6:30 PM (Hub) "One Person Can Make a Difference" with Emmy-award-winning journalist Tamara Banks

Saturday, December 17

9:30 AM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

6:30 PM (Hub) Winter Solstice Celebration, sponsored by the Secular Hub, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Humanists of Colorado, Denver Atheists,, and more. Bring a dish to pass, a book to share, and a quote to read on the topic of "Disappointment".

More Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Sunday, December 18

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

2:00 PM (Hub) Secular Hub Book Club

6:00 PM (BA) Boulder Atheists Winter Solstice party

Monday, December 19

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, December 20

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

6:30 PM (Hub) Secular Sisterhood Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, December 21

7:00 PM (Hub) Biweekly Meditation Meetup

Thursday, December 22

12:30 PM (BA) Weekly Lunch Social at 3 Margaritas, 28th and Iris, Boulder

4:00 PM (BA) Afternoon Coffee at Red Rock Coffeehouse, Boulder

6:30 PM (Hub) Movie Night: TBD at 7 on the big screen at the Hub

SECULAR COLORADO

More Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Friday, December 23

7:00 PM (BA) Dinner in Lafayette

Saturday, December 24

9:30 AM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Sunday, December 25

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

1:00 PM (Hub) Festivus for the Rest of Us

2:15 PM (BA) Lunch at the Med on Walnut

Monday, December 26

5:30 PM (Hub) Social Hour Southeast, at Darcy's Pub and Bistro

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, December 27

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

Thursday, December 29

12:30 PM (BA) Weekly Lunch Social at 3 Margaritas, 28th and Iris, Boulder

4:00 PM (BA) Afternoon Coffee at Red Rock Coffeehouse, Boulder

6:30 PM (Hub) Movie Night: TBD at 7 on the big screen at the Hub

More Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Friday, December 30

6:30 PM (Hub) F*ck 2016 Hub Hang

Saturday, December 31

9:30 AM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Saturday, January 7

2:00 PM (Hub) Civics for Citizens with State Senator-Elect Lois Court

Sunday, January 8

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

11:30 AM (Hub) SVC Meeting: Secular Volunteers Serving the Community

SECULAR CONTACTS

This page contains contact information for the groups collaborating on this newsletter.

Secular Hub

Website: <http://www.secularhub.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/SecularHub/>

Humanists of Colorado

Website: <http://humanistsofcolorado.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/humanism-160>

Boulder Atheists

Website: <http://www.boulderatheists.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Boulder-Atheists/>

Freedom From Religion Foundation

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/FFRF-Denver/>

Sunday Assembly

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Denver/>

Secular Volunteer Corps

(Organized by the Secular Hub)

Americans United

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Americans-United-for-Separation-of-Church-State-Colorado/>

Jefferson Humanists

Website: <http://jeffersonhumanists.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/jeffcohumanists>

Newsletter Inquiries:

Send articles for consideration, letters to the editor, or inquiries to:

info@humanistsofcolorado.org