

8 Places to Definitely Avoid This Christmas Season

Liberty Counsel has launched its fourteenth annual Friend or Foe Christmas Campaign, pledging to be a “friend” to those who recognize Christmas and a “foe” to those who censor it. The campaign educates, and if necessary litigates, to make sure Christmas and Christian themes are not censored.

Liberty Counsel is actively monitoring cases across the country where there is intimidation by officials and groups to remove the celebration of Christmas in public and private sectors. These threats include atheist groups seeking to ban nativity scenes from public property, senior living centers that prohibit residents from singing Christmas carols, public schools that ban students from wearing the Christmas colors of red and green, school officials who censor religious words from Christmas carols and retailers that profit from Christmas while pretending it does not exist. In all these situations, Liberty Counsel has successfully educated and reversed these anti-Christmas actions.

Already this year, Liberty Counsel has offered assistance to Kerr County Commissioners in Kerrville, Texas. There, an atheist group, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, demanded the county place a banner advertising its organization next to a nativity scene that has been displayed annually on the county courthouse lawn since 1999. In addition, a local group in Orange, Texas, known as the Orange County Atheists, created controversy last year by threatening to hang an atheist banner next to the city’s nativity scene.

Liberty Counsel provides a memorandum to offer guidance regarding publicly and privately sponsored religious holiday displays, religious holidays in public schools and the rights of public school students in the context of religious

holidays. For example, publicly sponsored nativity scenes on public property are constitutional so long as there is a secular symbol of the holiday in the general context. Privately sponsored nativity scenes or religious symbols are also permissible on public property that has been opened to the general public for expressive activity. No secular symbol is necessary.

Classroom discussion of the religious aspects of the holidays is permissible in public schools. A holiday display in a classroom may include a nativity scene or other religious imagery so long as the context also includes secular symbols. A choral performance also may include religious and secular holiday songs. If the students select their own songs independent of the direction of school officials, there is no requirement that the songs include secular numbers. Students may distribute religious Christmas cards to their classmates during non-instructional time, before or after school or between classes. If the students are not required to dress in uniform, they may wear clothing with religious words or symbols or don religious jewelry.

Liberty Counsel also provides a Naughty & Nice List that catalogs retailers that recognize and those that censor Christmas.

“Celebrating Christmas is legal in public schools and in public venues. In the private retail market, consumers can choose to patronize stores that recognize Christmas and refuse to buy from those that pretend it does not exist,” said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel. {eoa}