

Satanic Temple to Launch New Lawsuit Against Biblical Monument

The Satanic Temple responded swiftly to the installation of a new Ten Commandments monument on the Arkansas Capitol grounds in Little Rock.

No sooner had the monument been lowered onto the grounds by a crane on Thursday (April 26), than Lucien Greaves, the co-founder of the Satanic Temple, said his group will join a lawsuit soon to be filed by the American Civil Liberties Union alleging an unconstitutional endorsement of religion.

The Satanic Temple, which claims 100,000 members around the world, has become a vocal advocate on the issue of religious freedom. It has attempted in various provocative ways to highlight the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion.”

After Oklahoma installed a Ten Commandments monument on its Capitol grounds in 2012, the group tried to install its own statue of Baphomet, a goat-headed, angel-winged creature accompanied by two children smiling at it.

It never got that far after the state’s Supreme Court ordered the removal of the Ten Commandments monument in 2015, on the grounds that it violated a provision in the state constitution prohibiting use of state property to further religions.

Greaves, who flew from his home in Salem, Mass., to Little Rock to be on hand for the installation of the monument, predicted an Arkansas court would do the same.

“It may be compelled to make a summary judgment,” he said.

Members of the Satanic Temple don't believe in a literal Satan but see the biblical Satan as a metaphor for rebellion against tyranny. The group's stated mission is "to encourage benevolence and empathy among all people, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense and justice."

The group believes the state is discriminating in favor of Christians.

"No religion gets preference over the other," Greaves said. "They should all have access to whatever forums are available."

The Arkansas monument replaces one that was destroyed less than a year ago when a man crashed his car into the original display less than 24 hours after it was installed.

Michael T. Reed was charged with criminal mischief but found to be mentally unfit to stand trial. He had also destroyed a Ten Commandments statue in Oklahoma in 2015.

The installation of the new tablet-shaped monument was livestreamed online by state Sen. Jason Rapert, a Republican who sponsored the 2015 act that approved the monument's placement on the Capitol building grounds.

The act states the "placing of a monument to the Ten Commandments on the grounds of the Arkansas State Capitol would help the people of the United States and of the State of Arkansas to know the Ten Commandments as the moral foundation of the law."

It was funded by private donations.

Backers of the monument say it's meant to copy a Ten Commandments monument in Texas that stands on the grounds of the state Capitol. The U.S. Supreme Court allowed that monument to stand since it had been there for many years and because there were other monuments on the grounds of the

Austin Capitol. {eoa}

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