

The 7 Worst Anti-Religious Discriminators of the Year

Ebenezer Scrooge may have been a work of fiction in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, but his cold-hearted ways are very much alive and well this Advent season.

Multitudes wear the "Bah-humbug" holiday muffler proudly—including anti-religious people and organizations who are attacking the religious liberty of Americans all across our nation.

At Liberty Institute, we think they deserve special recognition—and exposure so that more Americans are alerted to their outrageous efforts.

And that's why this Christmas season we're asking you and other friends and supporters to participate in our 2014 Scrooge Awards for Anti-Religious Discrimination—and nominate the No. 1 "Scrooge" who deserves to be called out for seeking to stamp out religious expression across America.

Here are the nominees for the 2014 Scrooge Awards for anti-religious discrimination.

1) The Plano Independent School District (Texas)—For its distaste for candy canes ... and kids celebrating Christmas. Elementary school students learned you're never too young to be a "Tiny Tim" victim of religious viewpoint discrimination. The Plano Independent School District in Plano, Texas, stopped students from sharing the following with their school friends: candy-cane pens with religious messaging in gift goodie bags, "Jesus" pencils, as well as free tickets to a Christmas play ... even though the law says kids have the right to do all the above. School officials even argued that these students do not have First Amendment rights. After a decade of the Plano ISD fighting against religious

liberty in its schools, we are now proceeding back in trial court with the “Candy Cane Case.”

2) The American Humanist Association—For trying to tear down a veterans memorial erected by mothers in memory of their sons lost in war. After standing almost a century without objection, a historic World War I veterans memorial in Prince Georges Country, Maryland, is under attack by American Humanist Association simply because it includes traditional religious imagery. This anti-religion group apparently has no sympathy for the mothers whose sons died fighting for freedom—and who raised the funds to have this memorial erected to honor their children.

3) The Town of Bayview, Texas—For prohibiting a church and its affiliated school from operating on their own property! When Cornerstone Church by the Bay requested permission from the town to use its own property to build a church and school, the Bayview Board of Aldermen said, “Bah, humbug!” to the request and unanimously voted to ban churches and schools in the area where Cornerstone’s property sits—despite allowing other nonreligious non-residential uses! Fortunately, we’re on the scene to enforce the law the town is violating.

4) Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), the ACLU and Kountze Independent School District (Texas)—For their attempt to censor private inspirational messages from cheerleaders. Looking for a simple way to encourage the football players at their games, the middle school and high school cheerleaders in Kountze, Texas, decided to paint Bible verses on the run-through banners. The girls used their own money to pay for the supplies and paint these messages on their own time to encourage their team. FFRF made the initial complaint about the banners, the ACLU is supporting the censorship with court filings, and the Kountze ISD continues to seek to control the private religious message of the cheerleaders as the case proceeds to the Texas Supreme Court.

5) The State of Georgia Department of Public Health—For firing a respected health executive because of what he said in his church. Dr. Eric Walsh was hired as the District Health Director in Georgia. But when state officials learned about Dr. Walsh's traditional, conventional religious beliefs, they combed through his sermons (he was an ordained lay minister in his church) and terminated him, leaving a voicemail in which they laughed about firing him.

6) Brawley Union School District in Brawley, California—For blacking out references to God from a salutatorian's graduation address. Don't say "God bless us, everyone!" if you're an exemplary student giving a graduation speech in this school district. High school officials censored salutatorian Brooks Hamby's simple references to God in his graduation speech three times. Then, they threatened to turn off his microphone if he dared read his speech with any inclusion of the Bible or his Christian faith. Brooks wouldn't back down, and filed a formal complaint.

7) Military Religious Freedom Foundation's Mikey Weinstein—For complaining to the U.S. Air Force Academy about a cadet writing a Bible verse on his personal dorm dry erase board. Weinstein, an attorney who has called for the court-martial of 400 Christian officers for sharing their faith, got into the middle of the "Whiteboard Controversy" by complaining when a cadet wrote Galatians 2:20 on his personal dry erase board—which was hanging on the cadet's dorm room door. The Air Force Academy persuaded the cadet to erase the Bible verse, calling the incident Weinstein notified them about, "a teachable moment." Thankfully the situation boomeranged into an education for the Air Force about religious freedom, but Weinstein still merits a visit from Jacob Marley and Friends.

The First Amendment is not only seasonal, but it's the guarantee of the "free exercise" of religion that our Founding Fathers intended for our great country all year long.

The battle to protect the expression of your faith—and the religious beliefs of people in our government, in schools, in workplaces, the military, public places and more—never takes a break for any holiday. And that's why we need the ongoing support of friends like you so that we can stand up to the Scrooges who want to stamp out religious liberty all year long. So thank you for your donation and your prayers today!