

[Date]

The Honorable [Mayor]  
[Address]

Greetings Mayor [Name],

We at the Family Research Council trust you and your administration have enjoyed a wonderful start to 2019!

We are writing to you regarding a growing trend of letters that are sent to cities, towns and municipalities across America each January regarding your towns' Christmas displays, especially the inclusion of Nativity Scenes that recognize the religious origins of Christmas. We want to provide you with information to help you respond to claims that you are legally bound to remove a display that most towns in America have had in place for many years.

These letters claim that your town is violating the Constitution by having such a display and that legal action will ensue if you fail to remove the display. Our friends at Alliance Defending Freedom have prepared information that will help you understand the legality of seasonal displays and their legal staff is available to answer your questions.

From Alliance Defending Freedom's "Religious Freedom of Expression" document...  
"Each year, the Christmas season seems to begin earlier and earlier, as festive decorations bedeck stores, homes, and churches. Throughout our nation's history, many celebrate Christmas as the birth of Christ in the public and private sector by displaying nativity scenes, singing religious Christmas carols, giving gifts, and sharing with others the story of the first Christmas. In recent years, misconceptions about the legalities of the celebration of Christmas have led government officials to remove Christ from Christmas in public places such as schools, parks, libraries, and government offices. As a result, school calendars, which once announced "Christmas Vacation," now read "Winter Vacation," and religiously themed decorations featuring nativity scenes have been replaced by snowmen and reindeer.

The U.S. Constitution requires none of these things. No court has ever ruled that the Constitution demands that government officials censor Christmas carols, eliminate all references to Christmas, or silence those who celebrate Christmas. These efforts to suppress Christmas celebrations demonstrate that many public officials mistakenly

believe that allowing seasonal religious expression would violate the so-called “separation of church and state” – a doctrine often cited in connection with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. As a result, public officials across our nation have denied citizens their constitutional rights of religious speech and expression under the guise that it is constitutional.

To dispel this notion, it is important to realize that the Constitution does not “require complete separation of church and state.” The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment merely requires the state to be neutral in its relations with religious believers and non-believers; it does not require the state to be their adversary. In fact, the Constitution “affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any.” “State power is no more to be used to handicap religions, than it is to favor them.”

The document closes by saying... “The U.S. Constitution does not require government officials to obliterate religious observances and expression from the public square. It is the hope of Alliance Defending Freedom that this information will help dispel the extremist myths about the Establishment Clause that have prompted tragic and unnecessary acts of government censorship of religious speech. And to all, we wish you a Merry Christmas!”

If your administration receives a letter from any organization that advises you to remove any religious displays, please feel free to reach out to me and I will help you guard your tradition of recognizing the religious roots of the holiday in any way I possibly can.

All the very best to you and your city!

**Tim Throckmorton**  
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