

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

A national freethought association working to keep religion out of government | FFRF.ORG
Ozarks chapter of FFRF

Hello James,

The Spring season is officially here, and despite some chilly weather this past week, the emergence of color is abound. The days are getting longer and sandals weather will be here soon enough. But our politicians seem stuck on proposing (and unfortunately, passing) some really bad legislation. In February's newsletter, we discussed Senate Bills SB207 through SB 212, which greatly restrict the Citizen Ballot Initiative process. To the chagrin of many, all but one of these have now become law:

- SB 207 is now **Act 218**
- SB 208 is now **Act 240**
- SB 209 is now **Act 273**
- SB 210 is now **Act 274**
- SB 211 is now **Act 241**
- **SB 212** was rejected by members of the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee.

But our elected officials continue to "flood the zone", and now they've turned their attention to religious indoctrination. Courtesy of your Arkansas elected leaders:

- **SB223 - To create the Religious Rights at Public Schools Act of 2025**
 - This was delivered to the Governor and awaiting a signature as of 3/20/2025
- **SB433 - Regarding the Display of the National Motto and the Ten Commandments**
 - This was passed by the Senate, and now in review in the House.
- **HB1705 - To require information concerning how the Religious and Moral Beliefs of the Founding Fathers influenced the Founding of the United States to be embedded into existing social studies standards.**
 - This was passed by the House, and now in review in the Senate

As trite as this sounds, **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!!** Please contact your Senator at 501-682-2902 and your Representative at 501-682-6211. If you don't know who your elected leaders are, use this cheat sheet:

- **Arkansas House of Representatives** (map)
- **Arkansas Senate** (list)

Please, please, please consider picking up the phone and reaching out to your elected officials. Democracy has never come under such intense pressure, but you, the citizen of the state, constituent of the United States and master of your domain, have the power & voice to be heard. Make sure you exercise this invaluable right.

Turning our attention to local activities, the **Ozarks Chapter of FFRF** capped off the winter season in Fayetteville on Saturday, March 1st, to watch Amanda Tyler deliver her speech titled *Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. Amanda is the lead organizer of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty's Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign and co-host of BJC's Respecting Religion podcast. She is also a recipient of FFRF's Champion of the First Amendment award, and spoke at FFRF's National Convention in 2023 in Madison, WI.



Amanda Tyler speaking to the audience on Saturday, March 1st, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, AR. At least a dozen Ozarks FFRF members were in attendance.



Members of the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF enjoying a Thai dinner after watching speaker Amanda Tyler.

Our chapter met for our monthly meeting on March 16th to iron out the details for the 2025 Speaker Series, which we are pleased to announce our first two speakers in Kate Cohen (June 18th) and Forrest Valkai (July 13th). More details will be announced in the April newsletter. Our nascent organization is gaining clout, and we have some really cool things working behind the scenes. Stay tuned for an exciting year!



Beautiful Sunday Secular Meetup at The Meteor Cafe in Bentonville on March 16th.

Here is a list of the upcoming events!

March 23rd (Sunday) - 2:00pm to 4:00pm

- **Atheist Day & Spring Celebration at Wildwood Lane Tulip Farm** (4810 Wildwood Ln, Springdale, AR) - Let's get outside and celebrate the spring season by walking through Wildwood Tulip Farm in Springdale and enjoying the vibrant colors. There is a \$2 entrance fee, and tulips can be picked for \$1.50/ea. Pets on leashes and strollers are welcome. Come enjoy Atheist Day on a beautiful Sunday afternoon! We hope to see you there!

March 29th (Saturday) - 8:00am to 5:00pm

- **Fourth Annual 3rd Street Fair** - our first outdoor activity of 2025 will be at the 3rd Street Fair in Fort Smith, hosted by Olen & Co Market. We invite all those secular citizens to come check us out at this "funky" market. The event will be held at 11 N 3rd St Fort Smith, AR 72901.

April 19th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 1:00pm

- **Bentonville Farmers Market** - Downtown Bentonville Inc (DBI) has implemented new rules for information groups in 2025. Whereas we previously had a designated area where we could set up a table, chairs and tent, non-profit groups are now relegated to a "free expression" zone that will be coordinated the day of the event. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for the latest information on where you can find us but WE WILL BE THERE!

April 26th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 1:00pm

- Fayetteville Farmers Market

May 10th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 1:00pm

- Bentonville Farmers Market

May 12th (Monday) - 6:00pm to 7:30pm

- **Democratic Party of Benton County** Speaking Engagement - Ozarks Chapter of FFRF President Chris Sweeny will be speaking at the monthly meeting of the Democratic Party of Benton County. This meeting is open to the public and starts at 6:00pm. Location TBD. No registration required.

May 18th (Sunday) - 10:00am to 11:00am

- Sunday Secular Meeting - location TBD

May 24th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 1:00pm

- Fayetteville Farmers Market

June 7th (Saturday) - 11:00am to 7:00pm

- **2025 Fort Smith Lambda Society Pride Festival** at Riverfront Park in Fort Smith - The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be tabling at the Fort Smith Lambda Society Pride event. The address is 121 Riverfront Dr, Fort Smith, AR 72901

June 14th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 1:00pm

- Bentonville Farmers Market

June 18th (Wednesday) - 6:00pm to 7:00pm

- **2025 Speaker Series with Kate Cohen** @ Bentonville Library - More information to come

June 28th (Saturday) - 11:00am to 5:00pm

- **NWA Pride Festival 2025** (W. Dickson Street) - The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be tabling at the NWA Pride Festival on West Dickson Street.

July 13th (Sunday) - 1:00pm to 2:00pm

- **2025 Speaker Series with Forrest Valkai** (aka, Renegade Science Teacher) @ Fayetteville Library - More information to come!

Please consider becoming a member of both **FFRF.org** (National Organization) and the **Ozarks Chapter of FFRF** (a non-profit in Arkansas). Your membership dues help support the organization by financing the events where we participate, bringing speakers to Northwest Arkansas, and helping further our mission to protect the separation between church and state. Check out both links to see what is included with membership, and how your support makes an impact.

Cheers,

Chris Sweeny

Ozarks Chapter of FFRF.org

Follow us on **Facebook**

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