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Hello James!

Happy Autumn! At 7:05pm CDT, we will officially observe the autumnal equinox. What felt like one of the hottest summers in recent memory is finally lending to some cooler outdoor temperatures. Cheers to sweatshirts and pumpkin spiced lattes! :)

And just like that, we are halfway through our 2026 Secular Speaker Series and rounding out our year's activities. Where does the time go!?!? Fear not! We have an exciting weekend on tap with **Sam McGuire**, Director of Grassroots Organizing and Advocacy for the **American Atheists**. One of more unheralded group, American Atheists have been at the forefront of Child Marriage bans that have been passed over the last few years, including one that passed in Oklahoma earlier this year. We hope you can join us for this third installment of our speaker series! But lot's of other stuff to get to in this September newsletter!

ADVANCE NOTICE! You are first to know about an upcoming FFRF billboard campaign running in select markets across the country from **Oct. 5 through Nov. 1**.

The campaign features the message **"Vote Like Your Rights Depend On It — Because They Do"** and directs viewers to **ffrf.us/vote**. Below is an example of the creative so you can see what the billboards will look like. The Ozarks Chapter was one of only 19 chapters selected to participate, which speaks volumes to how our chapter is receiving a lot of attention at the national level. Way to go!

This digital bulletin is located at Hwy 71B 300 South of W Lakeview Dr., 4915 S. Thompson E/S, Springdale, AR, N/F (D05N1). The best viewing spot is in the parking lot of La Huerta Mexican Restaurant, located at 4901 S Thompson St, Springdale, AR 72764. Our chapter is planning to get a group photo of this later next month (details below).



FFRF billboard campaign running in select markets across the country from **Oct. 5 through Nov. 1**



Speaking of voting, are you registered to vote?? There is a massive mid-term election upcoming on November 3rd and everyone's participation is greatly needed. Democracy only works when constituents participate. With Arkansas' abysmal voter turnout, the magnitude of your vote is even greater! Please make sure to double check your voter registration, which is as simple as verifying your status here: https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/VoterView.

Ozarks Chapter of FFRF Monthly Activities:
The hot weather did not deter us from doing what we do best! Here is what we packed in!

- The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF tabled at the Bentonville Farmers Market on Saturday, September 12th.
- The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF hosted their monthly business meeting on Sunday, September 20th at the Onyx Coffee Shop in Springdale.
- The Ozarks Chapter prominently featured in the August/September edition of the FFRF Freethought Today.



The Ozarks Chapter tabling at the Bentonville Farmers Market on Saturday, September 12th.



The Ozarks Chapter holding a monthly business meeting at Onyx Coffee in Springdale on Sunday, September 20th.

Arkansas Church / State Watchdog

There is never a shortage of news here in the state of Arkansas. Here are some recent Arkansas Church/State news stories of interest:

- The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday will hear oral arguments in a case challenging a state law requiring public schools to display the Ten Commandments in classrooms. At issue is Act 573 of 2025, which mandated that public schools in Arkansas prominently display a copy of the Ten Commandments. This is a big deal with a very conservative district court. Read more about it here.
- Perhaps more humorous, but don't you love getting the attention of Jason Rapert!? Shortly after the American Humanists Association posted about Fish Stark's upcoming tour (which includes a stop in Bentonville), Jason Rapert sent a note to his social media followers praying "*people not to attend these lectures.*" Nothing like free advertising!! Thanks Jason!! Get your tickets here for October 22nd! :)-



Much to the chagrin of Jason Rapert, the Ozarks Chapter is hosting Fish Stark in Bentonville on Thursday, October 22nd.

2026 Secular Speaker Series

We are halfway through with our speaker series! Thank you to everyone who has joined us at one of our first two events! Our next speaking event is only 96 hours away. Thanks to our generous donors, we are able to make these events available to the general public for only $10 per person per event. Please join us for these remaining events:

- **Saturday, September 26th at 2pm** - **Sam McGuire** (American Atheists) @ Fayetteville Library (Ziegler Reception Room). Get tickets here!

- **Thursday, October 22nd at 6pm** - **Fish Stark** (Executive Director for American Humanist) @ Bentonville Library (Walton Foundation Community Room). Get tickets here!

Our final two speakers will really hone in on the threat posed by Christian Nationalism, whether it has to do with model legislation (e.g., Ten Commandments in schools) to taking away rights of women and marginalized groups. Your presence at these events goes a long way and demonstrates that people of the Ozarks care deeply about these issues. Please consider joining us at one of our two remaining events.



Sam McGuire, American Atheists, will be speaking on Saturday, September 26th at 2pm at the Fayetteville Public Library.

Community Focus

This month, we'd like to highlight **Vote Common Good**, a group whose mission is to mobilize people of faith to make the common good their voting criteria. Doug Pagitt and Robb Ryerse (running for Congress in Arkansas' Third District (AR-03)) are connecting with communities through their **Faith, Hope, & Love: Supporting Democracy for All** tour, which made stops in Fayetteville and Bentonville last week. At each event, they spoke about "Confronting Christian Nationalism" by defining what it is and what it isn't. They pointed out how religious freedoms are only protected when there is freedom from religion. There is also a documentary they put together called "Who's the We?" that is available for streaming on PBS. Click **here** for more information.

It was great to connect with this group during their stop in NWA! On behalf of the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF, we applaud **Vote Common Good** for helping protect separation between church and state.



Here is our official Calendar of events for the next couple of months!

September 26th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 12:30pm

- **Fayetteville Farmers Market** - The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be at the Fayetteville Farmers Market! Come meet likeminded freethinkers and spend time chatting with fellow citizens of the Ozarks.

September 26th (Saturday) - 2:00pm to 3:00pm @ Fayetteville Public Library

- **Secular Speaker Series with Sam McGuire (American Atheists)** - Come join us for our third speaker series event of 2026 as we listen to Sam McGuire, Director of Grassroots Organizing & Advocacy, as she discusses the various violations of Church/State Separation that their organization gets involved. Get tickets here!

October 10th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 12:30pm

- **Bentonville Farmers Market** - Come join us for the final Bentonville Farmers market of the season as we engage the community on secular values. Look for us in the Free Speech area at 2nd Street and A Street Promenade.

****JUST ADDED** October 11th (Sunday) - 11:30am**

- **FFRF Billboard Group Photo** - Meet at the parking lot of La Huerta Mexican Restaurant (4901 S Thompson St, Springdale, AR 72764) for a Group Photo. Optional lunch to follow.

October 16th to 18th (Friday to Sunday) - All Day

- **FFRF National Convention** (Milwaukee, WI) - for those interested attending this national event, registration is open through September 30th by clicking here.

October 22nd (Thursday) - 6:00pm to 7:00pm @ Bentonville Public Library

- **Secular Speaker Series with Fish Stark (American Humanist Association)** - Come join us for our final speaker series event of 2026 as we hear from Fish Stark, Executive Director for the American Humanist, who has been at the forefront of Church/State Separation issues. Get tickets here!

October 24th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 12:30pm

- **Fayetteville Farmers Market** - The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be at the Fayetteville Farmers Market for the final time in 2026! Come meet likeminded freethinkers and spend time chatting with fellow citizens of the Ozarks.

November 1st (Sunday) - 7:30am to 10:00am

- **Adopt-A-Highway Road Cleanup** - Our final road cleanup of 2026 falls on Daylight Savings time where we roll back our clocks by one hour. This is a perfect way to "donate" your extra hour to a good cause! We will start at **Onyx Coffee** (101 E Walnut Ave, Rogers, AR 72756) at **7:30am** and carpool to the site at 8:00am. The 1 mile section of road takes approximately 90 minutes to clean, and we anticipate returning to Rogers by 10:00am. Orange vests and trash bags will be provided. We recommend wearing long pants, gloves and hat (sunscreen and bug spray, if needed). We have plenty of "grabber tools" to borrow of these can be purchased online separately. Please come support the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF by keeping Arkansas beautiful!

November 7th (Saturday) - 10:00am to 5:00pm

- **Fall Diversity Weekend in Eureka Springs, AR** - the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be tabling during this event. More details to come!

November 15th (Sunday) - 10:00am to 11:00am

- **Sunday Secular Meeting @ Ozarks Natural Foods** (380 N College Ave, Fayetteville, AR 72701) - Come join us for our monthly business and social meeting.

December 19th (Sunday) - 10:00am to 11:00am

- **Sunday Secular Meeting @ Onyx in the Momentary** (507 SE E St, Bentonville, AR 72712) - Come join us for our monthly business and social meeting as we wrap up 2026 and look to plan our fiscal 2027.

December 23rd (Sunday) - 6:00pm to 8:00pm

- **Festivus Celebration -** Our esteemed Chip Ballew will be hosting another entertaining edition of Festivus. This is a Save The Date. More details to be shared in a future newsletter.

Movies / Books / Entertainment:

Calling all Bookworms! Did you know the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF has started a monthly secular book club? Feel free to join the **Meetup group** as they meet monthly to review various pieces of literature.

And don't forget, **NWA Freethought** meets weekly and hosts end of month events at City Park restaurant and bar in Fayetteville with outside seating under covered patios. Check out their web link for more information.

Thank you for supporting Church/State separation! We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event!

Respectfully,

Chris Sweeny
Leader - Ozarks Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation
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