



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Where you stand is where (if) you pray

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Attachment One to this essay was sent to me by a friend. It is an article that appeared in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* newspaper during the 2015 Christmas season. I re-typed the article to make it more legible and used another photo of the same image that was of higher quality.

The logic of the Texas state officials is so riddled with contradictions I hardly know where to begin. I ask you to read Attachment One before further reading this page.

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First, the display is not religious. It is political. I suspect it brought down the wrath of Governor Greg Abbott because it was sponsored by a group called “Freedom from Religion Foundation.” Perhaps if the “from” in the title had been “of,” the display would have passed muster with Abbott.

Still, the fact remains that the display does not as Abbott claims, “mock Christians and Christianity,” unless of course Abbott thinks someone implying “I am free from religion” is mocking.

Second, the display was not located near Christian Christmas symbols, such as the nativity scene that was on the grounds of the Capitol. It was in the Capitol’s basement!

Third, I like Christmas trees, nativity scenes, and Christmas egg nog. My singing in a Christmas cantata while in school did not warp my psyche, nor did prayers that were recited by teachers and principals on occasion.

I like the symbols of Christmas. Personally, I don’t mind if a manger scene sits on a court house lawn, but for reasons discussed in this essay, it is not a good idea.

I surfed the Internet and found many papers, studies, court rulings about the subject. Here are some quotes:

The Supreme Court first addressed the constitutionality of public religious displays in 1980 when it reviewed a Kentucky law requiring public schools to display the Ten Commandments in class rooms. The court determined that the Kentucky measure amounted to government sponsorship of religion and was therefore unconstitutional. According to the court, the law violated the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause, which prohibits government from establishing a religion and from favoring one religion over another, or from favoring religion generally over nonreligious beliefs.

Four years later, the court took up its first case that specifically involved holiday displays. In that case, the court ruled that a Christmas nativity scene that the city of Pawtucket, R.I., had placed in a municipal square was constitutionally acceptable. The court stated that the nativity scene simply recognized the historical origins of the holiday, one that has secular as well as religious significance.

In those circumstances, the justices concluded, the nativity scene did not reflect an effort by the government to promote Christianity. Since these two decisions in the 1980s, the Supreme Court and lower federal courts have issued somewhat unpredictable rulings, approving some religious displays while ordering others to be removed. For instance, five years after approving the Pawtucket nativity scene, the Supreme Court ruled that a nativity scene on the staircase of a Pittsburgh, Pa.,

courthouse was unconstitutional. In that instance, the court concluded that, unlike the situation in Pawtucket where the crèche was shown together with more secular symbols, the Pittsburgh crèche was prominently displayed on its own and thus amounted to a government endorsement of religion.

...A third set of justices has held the middle and, so far, controlling ground. This group takes the view that a religious display placed in a public space violates the Establishment Clause only when it conveys the message that the government is endorsing a religious truth, such as the divinity of Jesus. For these justices, this same principle applies whether the display is sponsored by the government or by private citizens.¹

Fourth, had Abbott allowed the Founder's display to remain, there would have been a solid case that he was not "endorsing a religious truth," such as the virgin-birth of Jesus. By removing the display, and by his statements quoted in the newspaper article, he was making religious statements and using his government office to take religiously based actions. Based on the quotes above, Abbott had violated the Establishment Clause.

Fifth, and by far the most dangerous aspect of his actions: By allowing the nativity scenes to be placed on government grounds, yet denying other scenes the same privileges, he is only a stone throw away (pun intended) from adopting the Islamic Sharia Law model.

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The Law of Unintended Consequences can come back to give the Governor major headaches. Attachment Two poses some scenarios that could occur (granted, it's satire, but it is still possible to unfold with a more serious scenario). This attachment also points out the hypocrisy of the Governor's stand.

¹ <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2007/06/religious-displays.pdf>.

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Gov. Greg Abbott's complaint led to the removal of the Freedom From Religion Foundation exhibit in the Capitol.

WINTER SOLSTICE DISPLAY

Abbott puts exhibit out in the cold

BY MATTHEW WATKINS
The Texas Tribune

AUSTIN

To celebrate the season, the Texas Capitol has multiple Christmas trees and a nativity scene on its grounds. But after a complaint by Gov. Greg Abbott on Tuesday, "a winter solstice" display urging the separation of church and state has been kicked out.

The display was a cardboard cutout of the nation's Founders and the

Statue of Liberty looking down at the Bill of Rights in a manger. It had been set up in the Capitol's basement, hardly a high-traffic area, and didn't generate much of a public response.

But after finding out about it, Abbott called it a "juvenile parody" in a letter asking the State Preservation Board to remove the exhibit.

Now that it's gone, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, the group behind the display, says it's considering legal

options.

The Preservation Board approved the exhibit days earlier. But after receiving the letter from Abbott, the agency reconsidered.

Executive Director John Sneed snapped a picture of it and texted it to state Rep. Charlie Geren, R-Fort Worth, who chairs the House Administration Committee.

Geren said to take it Down.

"The governor wanted it down and I told John that, if I were him, I'd take it down," Geren said. "It was an inappropriate exhibit."

The removal comes a week after Abbott publicly expressed his support for a nativity scene outside the city of Orange municipal building. He argued that the city had a constitutional right to display the religious imagery.

In his letter Tuesday, he cited the Constitution again.

"The Constitution does not require Texas to allow displays in its Capitol that violate general standards of decency and intentionally disrespect the beliefs and values of many of our fellow Texans," Abbott wrote.

The display is offensive, doesn't serve a public purpose and doesn't educate anyone he wrote.

"Far from promoting morals and the general welfare, the exhibit deliberately mocks Christians Christianity," said Abbott's letter.

My thanks to Matthew Watkins of *The Texas Tribune* and the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*. Mr. Watkins created the article from which I wrote this essay. Mr. Watkins, I likely have overstepped the Fair Use laws with my use of your text and ideas. Any unlikely royalties that come forth to me will be split 50/50 between us. ...Just to let you know: I do not charge for these essays.

Photo from <http://www.texasmonthly.com/the-daily-post/governor-abbott-had-a-bill-of-rights-nativity-scene-removed-from-the-capitol/>.



Sharia Muslims, in protest of Texas Governor Greg Abbott's implementation of Christian Sharia (Chrisharia), placed this miniature symbol of Islam on the State Capitol grounds.

Abbott brings forth a Muslim Display

BY UYLESS BLACK
*IEI Press*¹

AUSTIN

To celebrate the season, the Texas Capitol has multiple Christmas trees and a nativity scene on its grounds. In accordance with the dictates of Governor Greg Abbott, no other religious displays are allowed, nor are anti-religious displays.

In keeping with Abbott's efforts to integrate Christianity and state, his ardent followers have named his crusade "Christian Sharia" or Chrisharia, for short.

Abbott's support of Christianity, at the expense of other religious beliefs---especially during the Christian religious season of Christmas has brought forth protests from other religious groups.

An op-ed piece written by a Muslim imam offered this view, "If the state of Texas can place Christian symbols on government property, and the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment forbids any law prohibiting 'the free exercise' of religion, we Islamics are also placing an Islam symbol on the State Capitol grounds."

When asked by reporters what this symbol would be,

"We have created a cardboard cutout of a mosque."

When queried about the choice of this revered building, the imam replied, "You have your mangers. We have our mosques."

In spite of Abbott's Chrisharia, other religions are using Texas' flaunting of the laws of the land to place their symbols on the Capitol grounds.

Hindus are constructing a large replica of a cow for their display.

A religious sect in New Zealand is also bucking Chrisharia, and planning on placing one of its symbols near one a nativity scene, as seen here:



When asked about this sort of symbol, the New Zealander sect cleric replied, "The Hindus have their cows, we have our sheep."

Abbott's attempt to keep Texas and Texans Christian has been overwhelmed by other religions demanding their Abbott-given rights to use government property for religious purposes.

An unidentified source at the governor's Chrisharia thought police (the Texas Ranger Mutawwi), leaked out that the policy of not keeping state and religion separated was creating logistical and financial problems---apart from allocating space on government property.

Most Texans have now declared themselves to be a church and thus, exempt from taxes, and free to use the Capitol.

¹ As before, format is extracted from Matthew Watkins' article in *The Texas Tribune* and the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*.

Photos are courtesy of Google.