

Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia

P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242

Phone: (610) 793-2737 * Fax: (610) 793-2569 * Website: www.fsgp.org

E-mail: fsgp@freethought.org

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A Holiday Message to The Chester County Commissioners

The Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia (FSGP) urges the Chester County Commissioners to adopt a defined and clear winter display policy at the Chester County Courthouse. FSGP members would fully support the adoption of a “No Display” policy should the Commissioners rule in favor of keeping the Chester County Courthouse free from any religious expression.

FSGP advocates complete separation of church and state. It would be most appropriate for the Chester County Commissioners to avoid the addition of religious expressions on government property. The grounds at the Chester County Courthouse are much too small to accommodate every known religion with equality. Neutrality hurts not one citizen.

Freedom of religious expression is expected at private businesses and homes. There are hundreds of churches that are supported by their members for the explicit purpose of expressing religious beliefs. It is not the duty of the Chester County Commissioners to entangle themselves into a religious issue, especially when they were voted into office with the expectation that they would be serving the entire community without bias or prejudice.

The Commissioners could instead decide that the grounds of the Chester County Courthouse will be used similarly to that of the Free Speech Zone located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Independence Mall at 5th and Market Streets). If an official Free Speech Zone is announced, then the entire community must be provided with equal access throughout the year.

Minority opinions must not be treated differently than majority opinions. FSGP would participate in a winter holiday display that would express the beliefs of its membership. Our display would be entitled “The Tree of Knowledge” and would convey the importance of education. Knowledge leads to freedom and with knowledge all things are possible. An equal size space, protection and electrical power would be expected if the same services are provided to other displays.

Margaret Downey, President