



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Religious Freedom Upholds Celebrating Christmas

As Advent begins, so will the annual controversy over Christmas displays and activities. So here is a brief summary of the Rutherford Institute's "Twelve Rules of Christmas." <http://bit.ly/1TNKSQb>

Public schools must allow students' personal expressions of the religious significance of Christmas unless they cause substantial disruption. Students may distribute literature about Christmas or invitations to church Christmas events consistent with rules governing student distribution of materials unrelated to schoolwork.

Teachers, if generally permitted to express their views about the holidays through personal items and attire, must not have Christmas-related expression prohibited. Teachers may send Christmas cards to families of students, as long as they do it on their own time.

Public schools may teach students about Christmas, including its religious significance, as long as it is for secular purposes, i.e., historical or cultural importance, not to promote Christianity. While they may not require students to sing Christmas songs whose messages conflict with their beliefs, they may include religiously themed Christmas music in their choral programs for secular purposes, i.e., musical quality or cultural value, or as part of an overall performance that includes songs relating to Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or other similar holidays.

Private citizens or groups may erect creches or other Christmas displays in public parks, subject to the same restrictions as other similar displays.

Government entities may erect Christmas displays, including creches, in context with other symbols of the holiday season, displayed to celebrate the public Christmas holiday, not promote its religious content.

Neither public nor private employers may prevent employees from decorating their offices for Christmas, playing Christmas music, or wearing Christmas-themed clothing because of the religious content, as long as such expressions are not used to harass or intimidate others. Employees whose sincerely held religious beliefs require that they not work on Christmas must be reasonably accommodated, barring undue hardship on the employer.

Government recognition of Christmas as a public holiday, and a paid holiday for government employees, does not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Inside every home, in every front yard, inside and outside our churches and throughout community spaces, may the birth of the Infant Jesus be honored and celebrated...
Rejoice! For today the Christ Child is born to save us all...