



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • www.ffrf.org

January 16, 2009

Daniel Clancy
President
Wisconsin Technical College System
4622 University Ave
Madison WI 53705

Brent Smith
President
Wisconsin Technical College System Board
4622 University Ave
Madison WI 53705

Dear Mr. Clancy and Mr. Smith:

I am contacting you on behalf of concerned students at Wisconsin technical colleges and other area taxpayers and members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) about a serious state/church violation occurring at all but one of the publicly supported technical colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System. FFRF is a national organization, which represents more than 13,000 members across the country, including over 1,100 in Wisconsin, and works to enforce the constitutional separation of state and church.

It is our information and understanding that fifteen out of the sixteen technical colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System are closed to observe the Christian holy day, Good Friday, which is April 10th this year.

Although there used to be an unconstitutional recognition of "Good Friday" in the state statutes, FFRF sued the State of Wisconsin over this violation and won. Enclosed is the federal Court Order signed by Judge John C. Shabaz, Case No. 95-C-634-S55, dated Feb. 26, 1996. The lawsuit was not appealed. As was pointed out in the legal briefs, "Good Friday" can in no way be construed as secular. In overturning the Good Friday state statute, Judge Shabaz stated that, "[t]he language of Wisconsin's Good Friday holiday law and its undisputed effect of favoring Christianity over other religions leads overwhelmingly to the conclusion that promotion of Christianity is the primary purpose of the law."

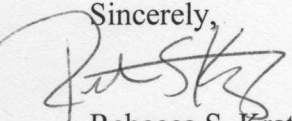
These Wisconsin technical colleges are in violation of the 1996 Court Order by closing their campuses on Good Friday. We wonder whether there was ever compliance by these

public schools with this thirteen-year-old Court Order. This practice also violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it not only promotes religion over non-religion, but also impermissibly favors Christianity over all other faiths. Certainly, these colleges do not cancel classes or close campuses for Yom Kippur, Ramadan or any other non-Christian religions.

Enlightened state colleges and universities across the state of Wisconsin, including the University of Wisconsin, remain open on April 10th this year without regard to observing this Christian holy day. These state colleges and universities are in clear compliance with the Good Friday Court Order.

We understand that the academic calendars for each technical college are determined by the colleges' local boards; however, given the almost uniform closing of campuses for one day in April, which happens to be a Christian holy day, we believe it is absolutely necessary for the Wisconsin Technical College System office to ensure compliance with the law. All sixteen Wisconsin technical colleges must comply with the Good Friday Court Order and remain open for regularly scheduled classes.

Sincerely,



Rebecca S. Kratz
Staff Attorney

Enclosure