

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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January 23, 2017

Sent via U.S. Mail and email: www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Typo in National Day of Patriotic Devotion?

Dear Mr. Trump:

We are writing on behalf of the more than 26,000 nonreligious members — and growing — of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which works to protect the constitutional principle of separation between church and state.

We observed what appears to be a mistake in your recent proclamation designating the date of January 20 in future as a "National Day of Patriotic Devotion." This proclamation states that there is "no peace where the people do not pray for it." We're sure you intended to say there is "no peace where the people do not *work* for it." It's self-evident that nothing fails like prayer. We also are sure you would not write a proclamation saying "We are one people . . .", then add language excluding the 80 million American citizens who are nonreligious. Such wording would appear to falsely equate patriotism with piety, thereby turning believers into insiders and nonbelievers into outsiders.

Religion in government, of course, is not a source of peace, but rather of division and worse. The framers of our godless Constitution, aware of the history of warfare, inquisitions and persecution in the 'Old World' and in many of the original colonies, wisely wanted no part of religion in our government. As a Supreme Court justice in Wisconsin sagely noted:

"There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state as religion. Let it once enter our civil affairs, our government would soon be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed . . . Those who made our Constitution saw this, and used the most apt and comprehensive language in it to prevent such a catastrophe."

—Justice H.S. Orton of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin, concurring opinion in *Weiss v. the District Board*, decided on March 18, 1890

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Very truly,



Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor
for FFRF