

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 · MADISON, WI 53701 · (608) 256-8900 · WWW.FFRF.ORG

May 19, 2015

SENT VIA U.S. & ELECTRONIC MAIL to: gmickells@madisonpubliclibrary.org

Mr. Greg Mickells
Library Director
Madison Public Library
201 W. Mifflin St.
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Easter Sunday Closings

Dear Mr. Mickells:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to object to Madison Public Libraries closing for Easter Sunday. We were contacted by a concerned citizen. FFRF is a national organization representing 22,500 members across the country, including more than 1,300 in Wisconsin. FFRF's purpose is to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church.

It is our understanding that all branches of the Madison Public Library were closed on April 5 this year in observance of Easter Sunday. Attached is a photo of the announcement from the Library website announcing the closure. It says "All Madison Public Library locations, including central, Sequoya and Penney will be closed on Sunday, April 5, for the Easter holiday." The branches mentioned would normally be open on Sundays in April.

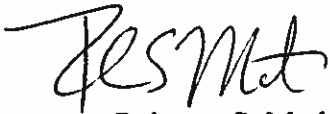
Easter Sunday is neither a federal holiday nor a Wisconsin state holiday. It is unconstitutional and inappropriate for city libraries to close on this Christian holy day. This practice violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it not only promotes religion over non-religion, but also impermissibly favors Christianity over all other faiths. Federal courts have struck down such favoritism. *See, e.g., Metzl v. Leininger*, 57 F.3d 618 (7th Cir. 1995) (holding that an Illinois statute closing schools on Good Friday was in violation of the Establishment Clause).

"[T]he First Amendment does not allow a state to make it easier for adherents of one faith to practice their religion than for adherents of another faith to practice their religion, unless there is

a secular justification for the difference in treatment.” *Id.* at 621. Therefore, the Library should not close its doors for a day commemorated only by Christians.

As a matter of policy, Madison public libraries should remain open on Easter Sunday and provide regular services to Madison citizens. By closing for this holy day, the Library is denying access to library services to all citizens, particularly the one in five U.S. adult citizens, and one in three young adults, who are nonreligious.¹ Closing libraries excludes these nonbelievers as well as non-Christians. We request that you respond in writing with assurances that this unconstitutional practice will not recur in future years.

Sincerely,



Rebecca S. Markert
Staff Attorney

RSM:njf

¹Pew Research Center, *Nones on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation*, THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE (October 9, 2012), available at <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise>.



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Library Closed Easter Sunday

All Madison Public Library [locations](#), including Central, Sequoia and Pinney will be closed on Sunday, April 5, for the Easter holiday.



While we're closed, you may drop items off in our book drops or use [LINKcat](#) to place holds, check your library card, or renew items.

The library's [databases](#) and [downloadable audiobooks and eBooks](#) will also be accessible with your library card while we're closed.

Keep in mind, however, that our web site will be not be accessible, due to scheduled maintenance, for a short period Sunday evening. You can still access LINKcat by going directly to www.linkcat.info.

Have a safe and happy holiday!

Submitted by Sean - Central on April 2, 2015

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