

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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

February 8, 2017

**SENT VIA EMAIL AND U.S. MAIL:**  
**govgeneral@wisconsin.gov**

Scott Walker  
Governor  
Office of the Governor  
115 East Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Re: Improper gift of religious cruise

Dear Governor Walker:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to object to your acceptance of a free Christian cruise. FFRF is a Madison-based national nonprofit organization with more than 26,500 members across the country, including more than 1,400 members in Wisconsin. FFRF's purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to represent the views of freethinkers (atheists, agnostics and nonbelievers).

Concerned Wisconsin citizens and residents contacted us to express concern over the report that Lifeshape, a Christian nonprofit, recently offered you and your wife a free religious Alaskan cruise. You recently announced your participation in the cruise, encouraging others to pay to join you for the cruise, which will include “nightly inspirational messages” such as “faith in the public arena” and “faith-driven entrepreneurship.”<sup>1</sup>

We were disappointed to learn that you accepted this improper offer to leverage your public office in order to promote your personal religion and obtain a free cruise. If you and your family wish to go on a scenic religious cruise, you should pay your own way.

The message you signed promoting the cruise—encouraging Wisconsinites to pay thousands of dollars for something you were offered for free—is unseemly. You repeat a tired assumption that all Americans “hold dear” religious faith, and Christianity in particular. In fact, nearly 30% of

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<sup>1</sup> [www.inspirationcruises.com/christian-cruise/lifeshape-alaska-2017](http://www.inspirationcruises.com/christian-cruise/lifeshape-alaska-2017).

Americans are non-Christian, including 23% of American adults—and 35% of millennials—who are nonreligious.

Further, we question whether accepting this gift and publishing an advertisement for a for-profit religious cruise, signed as “Governor, State of Wisconsin,” violate the State of Wisconsin Code of Ethics, which prohibits conflicts of interest and sharply limits gifts that state officers may receive, including “any lodging, transportation, money or other thing . . .” Wis. Stat. § 19.56 (2) (a) (2015). As the state’s highest officer, you should strive to uphold not only the letter, but also the spirit of the state’s ethical guidelines.

You were offered this gift only because you are the governor of Wisconsin. The gubernatorial office is secular in nature. You took an oath, in fact, to uphold the secular and godless U.S. Constitution, as well as the Wisconsin Constitution, which prohibits state officials from giving “any preference” to “any religious establishments or modes of worship.” Wis. Const. art. I § 18 (2016). We urge you to reject Lifeshape’s offer and to pay for your and your wife’s attendance on this religious cruise yourself.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor  
Co-president

ALG:rdj