

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

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December 8, 2010

Rebecca S. Markert, Staff Attorney  
Freedom from Religion Foundation  
P.O. Box 750  
Madison, WI 53701

**Re: Nativity Scene Display in Atrium of City Hall**

Dear Ms. Markert:

I have received your November 9, 2010 letter to me objecting to the Nativity scene placed in the Warren city hall atrium.

Your objections focus on freedom of religion guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and that the Nativity scene somehow was a violation of that constitutional right because it favors one religion over another.

I vehemently disagree with your objection.

The city of Warren in no way whatsoever shows any favoritism to any religion. All religions are welcome to celebrate their religious seasons with a display in city hall.

For example, the local Islam mosque celebrated Ramadan with a display at city hall this year. I did receive phone calls objecting to this display, but after I explained that all religions can have displays at city hall during their holy seasons, the persons objecting seem to understand.

I repeat, if any religion wants its display at Warren city hall, they are welcome.

We also have a prayer station in the city hall atrium for all religions to use. Furthermore, the National Day of Prayer is observed annually outside Warren city hall – again for **ALL** faiths. And we invite **ALL** Warren residents to use the Prayer Station and attend the National Day of Prayer ceremony.

Our Founding Fathers included freedom of religion in the Constitution to prevent any state-sponsored religion and rightly so, but to suggest that the Nativity scene implies a city-sponsored or city-promoted religion is simply inaccurate and an insult to all observers of all religions.

December 8, 2010

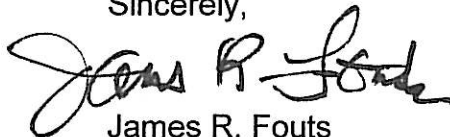
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The U.S. Supreme Court decision (County of Allegheny V. ACLU of Pittsburgh, 492 u.s. 573,1989) does state: ". . . government may not engage in a practice that has the effect of promoting or endorsing religious beliefs." The city of Warren is **NOT** "promoting or endorsing religious beliefs." If we were doing this, other religions would not be allowed to display their religious holy seasons in our atrium. However, they have been allowed and will be allowed.

In no way, has **ANY** religion been excluded from displaying its holy season in city hall.

For this reason, the Nativity scene display will remain in the city hall atrium.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James R. Fouts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

James R. Fouts  
Mayor of the City of Warren