

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: [jkirkpatrick@meetNKY.com](mailto:jkirkpatrick@meetNKY.com)**

Julie Kirkpatrick, CTA, CDME  
President & CEO  
Northern Kentucky Convention & Visitors Bureau  
50 East Rivercenter Blvd., Suite 1100  
Covington, KY 41011

Re: Continued divisive and unconstitutional religious promotion

Dear President Kirkpatrick:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation regarding continued divisive and unconstitutional religious promotion by the Northern Kentucky Convention & Visitors Bureau. Unfortunately, we have yet to receive any response to our letter of March 7, 2023, regarding the Bureau's promotion of the Ark Encounter.

We received a report that the Bureau is continuing to promote religious organizations via its new Kentucky Faith Trail program.<sup>1</sup> It is our understanding that the Faith Trail is at least partially funded by a \$305,000 grant from the state government.<sup>2</sup>

Per the Bureau's press release, the Faith Trail is a self-guided tour through eleven sites of "faith, culture, and history."<sup>3</sup> The Trail "is designed to be inclusive, welcoming people of all faiths and backgrounds to embark on a shared journey of discovery and reflection,"<sup>4</sup> Despite these inclusive aspirations, all eleven sites are Christian. To belabor the obvious, this makes the Trail the opposite of "inclusive" and welcoming to people of "all faiths and backgrounds."

Two of the sites, the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum, are well-known for spreading misinformation and promoting anti-science worldviews. The Ark Encounter purports to be an accurate replica of the mythical ark from the biblical story of Noah and claims that the Christian story of a worldwide flood actually happened.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the Creation Museum promotes

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<sup>1</sup> *New Kentucky Faith Trail Features Faith-Based Experiences Across the State, NKY*, <https://www.meetnky.com/articles/post/new-kentucky-faith-trail-features-faith-based-experiences-across-the-state-nky/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Lt. Gov. Coleman Presents \$22.5 Million In Awards For Kenton County*, Grant Cnty. News (Apr. 13, 2023), [https://www.pmg-ky3.com/grantco/news/lt-gov-coleman-presents-22-5-million-in-awards-for-kenton-county/article\\_72c053aa-2c32-53ce-b8f7-6e78f70cf30e.html](https://www.pmg-ky3.com/grantco/news/lt-gov-coleman-presents-22-5-million-in-awards-for-kenton-county/article_72c053aa-2c32-53ce-b8f7-6e78f70cf30e.html).

<sup>3</sup> *New Kentucky Faith Trail Features Faith-Based Experiences Across the State, NKY*.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Ark Encounter: About*, <https://arkencounter.com/about/>.

scientifically disproven myths of how the universe came to be and promotes inaccurate information, such as teaching guests that humans and dinosaurs once coexisted on Earth.<sup>6</sup>

Both the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum are owned by Answers in Genesis, an extreme evangelical Christian organization that also spreads misinformation and scientifically inaccurate teachings about our world, including by attacking the well-established theory of human evolution and claiming that the Earth is much younger than it actually is.<sup>7</sup>

The Bureau must cease using taxpayer money to promote the Faith Trail, including the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum.

As we previously explained, as a government entity, the Bureau must adhere to the Constitution's Establishment Clause, which dictates that the government cannot in any way show favoritism toward or promote religion. The Supreme Court has held that the First Amendment requires government neutrality between religions, and between religion and nonreligion. *See McCreary Cty. v. ACLU*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 15–16 (1947). By promoting exclusively Christian sites, including two sites that spread blatant misinformation, the Bureau is unconstitutionally favoring Christianity over all other faiths.

The Faith Trail's complete exclusion of non-Christian and religion-free (secular) sites and promotion of exclusively Christian landmarks and organizations sends the unmistakable message to all nonreligious citizens and members of minority religions "that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members." *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 309–10 (2000) (quoting *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 688 (1984) (O'Connor, J., concurring)). This message needlessly alienates Kentucky citizens and visitors who are part of the thirty-seven percent of Americans who are non-Christian.<sup>8</sup>

As a taxpayer funded organization, the Bureau must honor the secular Constitution, and respect its Establishment Clause which bars establishments of religion such as the Bureau's actions, by ceasing to promote the exclusively Christian Faith Trail as well as sectarian-based organizations that spread misinformation and anti-science viewpoints.

Similarly, the Kentucky Constitution explicitly notes that "No preference shall ever be given by law to any religious sect, society or denomination; nor to any particular creed, mode of worship or system of ecclesiastical polity[.]" Ky. Const. § 5. The Bureau is misusing tax money in support of a particular religious denomination and modes of worship. This must stop.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Creation Museum: About*, <https://creationmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Answers in Genesis: About*, <https://answersingenesis.org/about/>.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory A. Smith, et. al, *Religious 'Nones' in America: Who They Are and What They Believe* (Jan. 24, 2024):<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>.

The Bureau's purpose is to promote tourism and improve the economic landscape of Northern Kentucky, not promote faith, religion, Christianity, creationism, or a specific evangelical interpretation of the bible. We look forward to hearing from you about this at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker in blue ink. The signature for Annie Laurie Gaylor is on the left, and the signature for Dan Barker is on the right.

Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker  
*Co-Presidents*  
*Freedom From Religion Foundation*