

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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

May 7, 2026

SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: m.sparks@rowancountysheriff.net

Matt Sparks
Sheriff
Rowan County Sheriff's Department
600 W. Main St.
Morehead, KY 40351

Re: Rowan County Sheriff's Department Easter observance

Dear Sheriff Sparks:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding religious promotion on official Rowan County Sheriff's Department social media. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with over 41,000 members across the country, including nearly 300 members and a chapter in Kentucky. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

A local resident informs us that the Rowan County Sheriff's Office posted on its social media page on April 3, 2026 in observance of Good Friday. The post said, "Please keep in mind the importance of what this day is about & what Jesus did for each of us!" Please see the enclosed screenshot from the official Rowan County Sheriff's Office Facebook.

We also understand that the Sheriff's Office posted on its Facebook page celebrating Easter. The posted photo reads, "Happy Easter 'He is not here for he has risen just as he said' Mathew [sic] 28:6." Please see the enclosed screenshot of the post.

We write to request that the Sheriff's Office remove these religious posts and refrain from promoting religion on its official social media in the future.

The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment requires government neutrality among religions and between religion and nonreligion. *See generally, Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985); *Epperson v. Ark.*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 15–16 (1947). When the Sheriff's Office promotes religion, and specifically a single religion, via official social media, it signals clear favoritism toward religion over nonreligion, and in this case, Christianity over all other faiths. By using official social media to promote a single religion's holy day and instructing residents to "keep in mind" "what Jesus did for each of us" the Sheriff's Office has failed to remain neutral.

The Supreme Court has described the power of social media sites as "the principal sources for knowing current events, checking ads for employment, speaking and listening in the modern public square, and otherwise exploring the vast realms of human thought and knowledge."

Packingham v. North Carolina, 137 S. Ct. 1730, 1737 (2017) (internal citations omitted). Government entities must be particularly diligent not to entangle religious messages with official government pronouncements made in this “modern public square.”

We hope you agree that law enforcement must be even-handed and avoid any appearance of bias toward some citizens, and hostility toward others. Rowan County’s residents trust their law enforcement officials to attend to their secular duties and treat all community members equally.

This religious promotion on official Sheriff’s Office social media needlessly marginalizes Rowan County residents who are non-Christians. Thirty-eight percent of the American population is non-Christian, including the almost 30 percent who are nonreligious.¹ For Rowan County community members who subscribe to minority faiths or no religion at all, their Sheriff’s Office promoting Christianity is exclusionary.

The Rowan County Sheriff’s Office must remove these religious posts from its official Facebook page and refrain from promoting religion in the future. Please inform us in writing of the steps the Sheriff’s Office is taking to address this matter so that we may inform the community member who contacted us. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Charlotte R. Gude
Patrick O’Reiley Legal Fellow
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosures

¹ Pew Research Center (2024), <http://bit.ly/3W6Cl3m>.



Rowan County Sheriff - Kentucky

April 3 · 🌐

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Our office will close at noon in recognition of Good Friday.

Please keep in mind the importance of what this day is about & what Jesus did for each of us!



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Rowan County Sheriff - Kentucky

April 5 · 🌐

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