

Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) April Public Meeting

(May Public Meeting on page 4)

With: Kyle Steinberg

Kyle Steinberg from the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) in Madison, Wisconsin, will be here in person to discuss current trends in state/church litigation and how FFRF is actively responding to them. Highlights include lawsuits regarding religious charter schools, bills to place the Ten Commandments in public schools, and litigating more cases in state courts.



Minnesota Atheists has had a great relationship with FFRF for decades. Stop by our meeting to support our two groups and to pick up some free FFRF items!

Kyle Steinberg joined FFRF as the Anne Nicol Gaylor Legal Fellow in September 2024. He grew up in the Twin Cities suburbs and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2020 with a B.S. in Finance and a minor in Business Law. He earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2024. Kyle is licensed as an attorney in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

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Sunday, April 19, 2026

1:00 p.m.: Library opens. Social Time. Zoom starts.

1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting

1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break/Social Time

2:00–3:30 p.m.: Program

3:30 p.m.: Leave for dinner

Dinner:

Longfellow Grill

2990 W. River Pkwy.

Minneapolis, MN 55406

(1.4 miles west of the library, just over the Mississippi River, where Marshall Ave. in St. Paul turns into E. Lake St. in Minneapolis.)

Merriam Park Library

1831 Marshall Ave.

St. Paul, MN 55104



Online:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82344512218?pwd=VWNDckI2bVUx-eWJDTnAzU3BhQnNRdz09>

Or call in:

+13092053325,,82344512218#,,,
,*676832#

President's Column Rally for the Day of Reason

By Heather Hegi

The people of the State of Minnesota ended March with an enormous protest of President Trump. At the State Capitol alone, over 200,000 people attended the No Kings Rally! People are legitimately upset by the overreach of power and the inhumanity of the Trump administration. Atheists have reason to be upset too, with Trump repeatedly dismissing the separation of church and state and promoting Christian nationalism ideals.

Let's tap into that need to protest and show up for the Day of Reason. We sure aren't ready for a crowd of 200,000, but if we could get just a fraction of that to show up on a weekday in the Capitol Rotunda, we can make this event a memorable one. There are always state legislators who address the audience, which gives us hope. These legislators may end up in Congress in the future. Ilhan Omar spoke to us when she was a state representative;

Rally for Secular Government National Day of Reason

By Steve Petersen

Monday, May 4, 1:30–2:30 p.m.

Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
St Paul, MN

Minnesota Atheists has been hosting a rally for the National Day of Reason at the Minnesota State Capitol nearly every year since 2005! Cohosts this year include Rochester Area Free Thinkers and The HumanistsMN.

With Christian nationalist influence growing in federal government, it has never been so important to affirm our commitment to the constitutional wall of separation between religion and government, and to celebrate reason as the guiding principle of our secular democracy.

The program will include August Berkshire, Heather Hegi, and Grant Steves from Minnesota Atheists; David Breeden from Humanists MN; and

while a religious person herself, as a member of a minority faith she understands the importance of the separation of church and state.

I find this event a very worthwhile endeavor. A large crowd can really make an impact on a local and national level. Signs are welcomed to this event but are not necessary. What's important is to show up!



Patrick Elliot from FFRF. We also expect legislators to stop by to address the crowd. We have had anywhere from two to seven state representatives and state senators speak at our event.

We can't control what the legislative schedule is going to be for the day, which impacts their attendance, but we can control how we show up! Please, put this rally on your calendar, take a long lunch break, take the afternoon off, or make a day of it! Help us make a strong showing for this year's Day of Reason.



MN Atheist Philanthropy Minnesota Atheists Joins ARAP

By August Berkshire

Minnesota Atheists has become the first local American organization to be an official supporter of the Atheist Refugee Assistance Program (ARAP) (<https://atheistrefugeesturkiye.com.tr>), located in Turkey. Other supporters of ARAP include the international organizations Center for Inquiry (CFI) and Atheist Alliance International (AAI).

ARAP was founded in 2020 by Emir Onur Romano Cilek, an atheist refugee himself, currently living in Victoria, BC, Canada, to help atheists whose lives are at risk due to persecution from religious people.

ARAP helps atheist refugees in the following ways:

- **Accommodations:** Assisting with short-term and long-term housing solutions.
- **Job Search:** Assisting in finding employment opportunities in Turkey.
- **Legal Aid:** Providing Turkish Immigration lawyers.
- **Official Letters:** Issuing letters of support/reference.
- **Direct Guidance:** Providing Financial, Educational and/or Mental Health consultations.

ARAP runs an atheist safe house in Turkey called "The Lighthouse" (<https://atheistrefugeesturkiye.com.tr/safehouse-project>). This is a temporary shelter in Istanbul. ARAP has helped refugees from Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Somalia, Kenya, Georgia, Armenia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya.

Some refugees end up staying in Turkey permanently and some go on to seek asylum in other countries, sometimes in Europe and in Canada. You can see some of the people who have been helped at Saved Lives (<https://atheistrefugeesturkiye.com.tr/category/saved-lives>).

Minnesota Atheists has always cared about the fate of atheists worldwide. That's why we are affiliates of Atheist Alliance International (AAI) and also Humanists International (HI).

For Minnesota Atheists to be an official supporter of ARAP requires a donation of \$3000 a year. If you would like to help us pay for this you can go

to <https://mnatheists.org/make-a-donation> and in the Comments area enter "ARAP." Or mail us a check and in the memo line write "ARAP."



Escaping to safety and freedom: Anahita's escape from torture and abuse in Iran as an atheist.

Treasury Report December, 2025 to January, 2026

By Chris Matthews

Donations

- \$500 John Annen
- \$500 Matthew Hertz
- \$200 Art Kallenbach
- \$100 August Berkshire
- \$100 Erik Englebretson
- \$100 Kenneth G Holmbeck
- \$100 George Kane
- \$100 Jeff R Koeppen
- \$100 Ross Meisner
- \$100 Steve Petersen
- \$100 Terrence L Rogers
- \$25 Heather Hegi
- \$20 Peter N Holste
- \$11,069 private / cash (15)
- \$13,114 Total Donations**

Expenses

- \$2,395 Solstice
- \$936 Pride
- \$933 IT
- \$779 Newsletter
- \$232 Misc
- \$5,275 Total Expenses**

Current Building Fund — \$167,247

Atheism Today May Public Meeting

With: **Jennifer Michael Hecht**

Before the rise and popularity of the “Four Horsemen” of atheism (Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett), Jennifer Michael Hecht published *Doubt: A History: The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson — An Intellectual History of Western Skepticism* (October 2003). It became a bestseller and helped give rise to the (so-called) “New Atheist” movement.



Another book she wrote that caught the attention of many atheists was *Stay: A History of Suicide and the Philosophies Against It.* (2013).

Some of her other books include *The End of the Soul: Scientific Modernity, Atheism, and Anthropology in France* (2003), *The Happiness Myth: Why What We Think Is Right Is Wrong* (2007), and her latest book: *The Wonder Paradox: Poetry, Awe, and the Meaningful Life* (2023).

Jennifer Michael Hecht is a poet, historian, and commentator. Her poetry and prose appear in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *Politico*, *The American Scholar*, and *Vox*.

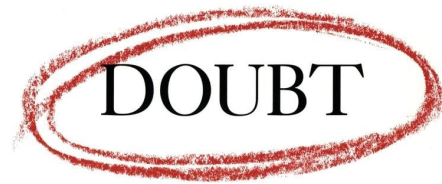
She has a Ph.D. in The History of Science and European Cultural History, from Columbia University and has taught history and poetry widely in-

cluding in the graduate programs at the New School and Columbia.

She has been a featured guest of many NPR shows, including multiple appearances on the Brian Lehrer Show and *On Being*, and some television, such as *Hardball* MSNBC and *Huffington Post Live*.

She lectures widely, including at atheist conventions. We are very lucky to get as a speaker someone who embodies the history of the modern atheist movement. From her unique perspective, she will give us her view of ... "Atheism Today." She will also take questions on any of her works.

"Jennifer Hecht's romp—lighthearted but serious—brings to life an awesome array of figures in philosophy, science, and literature, in a way that is wonderfully engaging."
—HOWARD ZINN, author of *A People's History of the United States*



a history

The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson

JENNIFER MICHAEL HECHT

Sunday, May 17, 2026

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1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting 1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break/Social Time

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Dinner:

Longfellow Grill

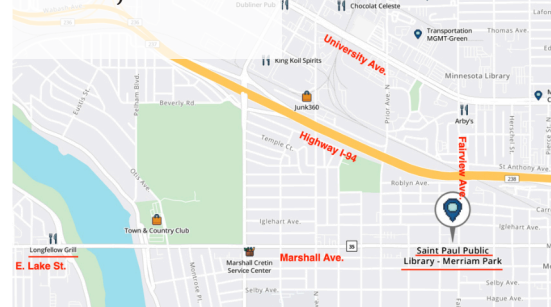
2990 W. River Pkwy.

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(1.4 miles west of the library, just over the Mississippi River, where Marshall Ave. in St. Paul turns into E. Lake St. in Minneapolis.)

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Or call in:

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The Frosty Atheist

By Ross Meisner



What do you get when you combine grand philosophical questions, exploration of the universe, introspection on the human condition, and irresistible story-telling?

Project Hail Mary!

I can't resist commenting on this new movie that hits so many of my buttons. My feelings about the movie (and the book!) are strong: it is probably the best treatment of current-era technology for realistic hard-science sci-fi that I have ever read. And the "characters," shall we say, are simply the best richly-developed versions I've seen.

What's this got to do with atheism and philosophy and wonder? Everything. It tackles provocative questions: Can humanity rally under global distress? Should we trust science? How much should the individual sacrifice for the many? Are we alone in the universe?

I believe we will find evidence of (rudimentary) life beyond Earth during my lifetime. This delights me to no end. It's already starting to emerge: Chemical signatures on Mars consistent with past life; hydrogen and organic compounds on Enceladus (a moon of Saturn); and possible dimethyl sulfide on exoplanet K2-18b (highly correlated with life, if the signal is confirmed). Incontrovertible evidence of alien life will provoke renewed scrutiny of our entrenched religions. Why did omniscient gods act so provincially, placing puny humans as glorious overlords at the center of the universe, when that is such a grossly incorrect framework? We know it's because religions were created by people, with their limited understanding of the world and their petty priorities of power and wealth.

What about intelligent alien life, you ask? Will we find that too? Ah, there's the rub. I believe we will learn that life is a natural process that commonly emerges from the physics of the universe. Just as suns and planets and chemicals form, I suspect bacterial life also forms under a wide variety of conditions. But then the tyranny of space and time imposes its harsh realities.

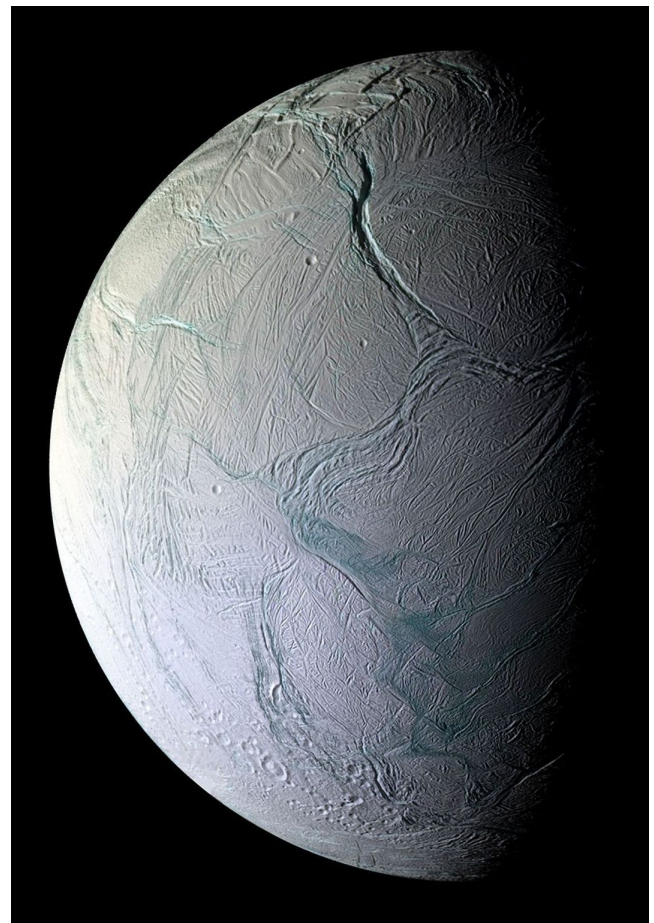
First, the emergence of intelligent life appears to be incredibly rare. The sequence of events that

led to homo sapiens four billion years (!) after life arose is replete with random disruptions, like the end of 160 million years (!) of dinosaur rule due to an asteroid. Consider that homo sapiens have existed for 300,000 years, about 0.2% as long as the dinosaurs.

Second, when a rare intelligence does emerge, the distances across space are so vast that we may as well be alone. Shouting "hello!" from a small deserted island in the middle of the ocean is pointless when the nearest possible listener is 1,000 miles away.

Third, there is serious uncertainty whether intelligent species can actually survive themselves. Intelligent races can exploit nature and science to wield vast powers that can easily destroy their own civilization. Homo sapiens are mere infants on the cosmic scale. We may not survive long enough to have a chance to meet a rare visitor from the distant cosmos.

Project Hail Mary offers us a moment to explore many delightful questions. The movie is great. The book, even better. Watch it or read it, and let me know what you think!



Enceladus — NASA

Upcoming Special Event

In Person National Day of Reason rally Monday, May 4, 1:30–2:30 p.m.
Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
St Paul, MN

Upcoming Monthly Events

In Person Bowling for Deities First Sunday of every month at 11:30 a.m.,
(usually) at Flaherty's Arden Bowl, 1273 West County Road E, Arden Hills, MN.

Hybrid Freethought Toastmasters Meeting 1st and 3rd Monday of every month from 6:30–8 p.m.,
Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul, MN.
freethought.toastmastersclubs.org.

Online Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.
Email chair@mnatheists.org for the meeting link.

Freethinking Females

Online 2nd Monday of every month at 7 p.m.

In Person Last Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m.,
Ansari's Mediterranean Grill & Lounge, 1960 Rahncliff Court, Eagan, MN.
Shattering the myth that atheist groups are male dominated with a females-only event.

In Person Blasphemer's Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m.,
Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield, MN.

In Person Lunch with Secular Seniors and Friends 1st Tuesdays, 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.,
Maya Cuisine, 1840 Central Ave NE, Minneapolis, MN.

In Person Friends Free of Theism Brunch 3rd Wednesdays, 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.,
Q.Cumbers Restaurant, 7645 France Ave S, Edina, MN.

In Person Trivia Night Every Sunday from 5:30–8 p.m.
Venn Brewing, 3550 E 46th St, Suite 140, Minneapolis, MN.

For more events and instructions for connecting to online events, visit:

www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists 



The “Nones” That You Know George Will

By *Milo Grika*

George Frederick Will (born May 4, 1941) is an American libertarian conservative writer and political commentator. He writes columns for The Washington Post on a regular basis and provides commentary for NewsNation. In 1986, The Wall Street Journal called him "perhaps the most powerful journalist in America". Will won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1977.

“An agnostic is someone who is not sure; I’m pretty sure. I see no evidence of God.”
— George Will

Get Famous (Sort of)

You too can become published by simply submitting something to The Minnesota Atheist newsletter:

- Have a blog? — *Let us reprint it.*
- Have an opinion? — *Let us hear it.*
- Want to review a movie/TV show/book, etc.? — *Give us your take.*
- Enjoyed a gathering or event? — *Tell us about it. You can also send us a photo.*

Just send your input to editor@mnatheists.org and we’ll do the rest.

Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

Membership Levels

- Student membership *Free*
- One-year individual membership \$35
- Three-year individual membership \$90
- One-year household membership \$45
- Three-year household membership \$115
- One-year sustaining membership \$75
- Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- Life membership \$600

Donation Funds

General Fund \$_____

Atheist Refugee Assistance
Program Fund \$_____

I would like my donation(s) to be

- private
- public
- attributed by my name only

for reporting in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter and on the website. (By default, each donation will be considered private.)

Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. Student memberships do not have voting rights and are not able to run for the board.

All paid memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

Please make checks payable to:

Minnesota Atheists.

Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

Just email newsletter Email address _____
(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

8 The Minnesota Atheist

Minnesota Atheists

Positive Atheism in action since 1991

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

Minnesota Atheist Board of Directors

Board Email

board@mnatheists.org

President

Heather Hegi

pres@mnatheists.org

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apres@mnatheists.org

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chair@mnatheists.org

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achair@mnatheists.org

Secretary

Steve Petersen

sec@mnatheists.org

Treasurer

Chris Matthews

treas@mnatheists.org

763.452.0337

Directors at Large

Trevor Nelson

dir1@mnatheists.org

Frank Leonard Eller

dir2@mnatheists.org

Shelly Nelson

dir3@mnatheists.org

The Minnesota Atheist Newsletter

Editorial Board

editor@mnatheists.org

Editorial Board

George Kane

George.Francis.

Kane@gmail.com

651.488.8225

Heather Hegi

dir1@mnatheists.org

Shirley Moll

srmoll@comcast.net

James Zimmerman

zgoatee@gmail.com

Editor

Milo Grika

editor@mnatheists.org

Chief Photographer

Richard Trombley

Membership and Change of Address

Steve Petersen

address@mnatheists.org

org

651.484.9277

Minnesota Atheists Media

AtheistsWeekly Email

(AWE)

Chris Matthews

awe@mnatheists.org

Minnesota Atheists

Affiliations

Atheist Alliance of America

Atheist Alliance International

American Atheists

The American Humanist Association

Council for Secular Humanism

The International Humanist and

Ethical Union

Secular Coalition for America

Minnesota Atheists

Membership

Regular memberships: 79

Life members:

54

Meetup subscribers:

4,517

AWE subscribers:

1,162

Minnesota Atheists Goals

Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly, neighborhood atheism in order to provide a community for atheists, educate the public about atheism, and promote separation of state and church.



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PO Box 120304

New Brighton, MN 55112

612.588.7031

info@mnatheists.org

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