

Atheist tries to block a cross at a Corpus Christi church

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By [Randy W. Bright](#)

In Corpus Christi, Texas, there will soon be a 210-foot-tall, 95 foot wide cross on the grounds of the Abundant Life Fellowship Church. It has taken the church three years to reach this point, but the groundbreaking ceremony was recently held with city dignitaries and State Representative Todd Hunter, who read a statement of support for the project from Governor Greg Abbott.

The inspiration to build the cross, which will be the largest in the Western Hemisphere and the second largest in the world, came from the moment the church's Pastor Rick Milby saw the 170-foot tall cross at Sagemont Church in Houston. At the time, the church was contemplating constructing a building, but Milby successfully convinced his congregation that the cross needed to come first.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that there are those who don't like the idea. Patrick Greene, an atheist who is well-known for filing lawsuits against Christian public displays, has reportedly claimed that the government officials who attended the groundbreaking ceremony have broken the law.

A post on Newsmax states that "Greene says the mayor and some members of the city council violated their oaths of office by attending a groundbreaking ceremony for the cross... He said he is considering suing the church as well."

Newsmax quoted Greene to have said, "They have to remain neutral and they cannot show preference of one religion over another, because it gives the public the idea that the government, which has to remain neutral in every level of the United States, it takes away neutrality(sic)."

According to an article entitled, "Corpus Christi mayor: Cross at center of lawsuit is personal," in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, Mayor Nelda Martinez made the point that Corpus Christi means "Body of Christ" and that her late father had dreamed that someday "a cross would stand at the helm of the Corpus Christi Bay."

Despite the lawsuit, Martinez does not regret attending the groundbreaking ceremony. According to the *Caller-Times*, Martinez said, "No matter what belief you have, this is the name of our city and it was my constitutional right to attend..."

The city attorney has stated that the lawsuit is frivolous.

I first reported on the trend toward removal of crosses from the public eye back in June of 2003, so while the rancor is real, it is nothing new. Back then the "Freedom from Religion Foundation" brought a legal challenge to a cross that had been displayed at the State Fair in Oklahoma City since the mid-1950's, claiming that it was being paid for with state funding.

There were several identical giant crosses built in Groom, Texas; Edmond, Oklahoma; and Effingham, Illinois. The complaints against the Groom cross was that it was “intimidation of non-Christians by the majority.”

In 2004, the ACLU threatened Elk Township in Ohio with lawsuit if they did not remove a cross from a government-owned cemetery. They also made a similar threat against Vinton County, Ohio, demanding that they remove a cross from the county courthouse.

Los Angeles County, California, conceded to similar demands from the ACLU, deciding to remove a cross from the city seal to avoid the cost of a legal battle. A county employee filed a lawsuit to prevent its removal with the assistance of the Thomas More Law Center, who stated that cross removals were a “government-sponsored message of hostility to Christians.” Richard Thomas of the TMLC stated that the “ACLU has a plan to systematically remove Christianity from the public square”.

In another famous case, the Mojave Desert cross, the ACLU eventually lost their battle to remove a cross that had been placed at the Mojave Desert Preserve in 1934 by World War I veterans. Ted Cruz participated in its defense at the U.S. Supreme Court, where it ruled 5-4 that the cross could stay. In that case, Justice Anthony Kennedy stated, “The goal of avoiding government endorsement (of religion) does not require eradication of all religious symbols in the public realm.”

The cross is an important symbol of Christianity because it has been well understood in the past what it meant, that is that God loved us so much that he allowed his Son to die on the cross for us. Unlike the crescent moon of Islam, it is not a symbol of tyranny, death or Sharia law, but one of the only religion that is tolerant of all other religions. Despite that, I am sure the attacks will continue until all crosses have been removed from public view. In the meantime, we should be willing to display and defend the symbol of the cross.



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