

Dear Mayor Reed,

Recently you made the decision to [remove Kelvin Cochran from his position as Atlanta Fire Chief](#). You have faced a great deal of backlash from many who would paint your actions as religious intolerance, but we at the Atlanta Coalition of Reason wish to thank you for your leadership and your commitment to upholding the secular values upon which our nation was founded.

Mr. Cochran's actions – for which he was initially suspended – showed a blatant disregard for the nature of his position. It is of course his right to talk about his faith in a personal capacity. However, he mentioned his position as fire chief in his book, and he distributed his book to those under his chain of command. You clearly recognized that these actions had at least the potential to be seen as an unconstitutional endorsement of religion by a government body. By suspending Mr. Cochran until the matter was fully investigated, you showed a commitment to balancing a private citizen's right to religious expression and the need for a government body to not show any appearance of supporting any particular religion.

While your administration acted in good faith during the investigation, Mr. Cochran did not. In attempting to paint your entirely reasonable response as "religious persecution", he has possibly opened up your administration and the City of Atlanta to litigation, and has attempted to damage your administration's relationships with leaders across the city and beyond. It now appears that Mr. Cochran, having been prevented from abusing his position of authority in an attempt to proselytize for his religion, has indeed become the persecutor.

It is for this reason that members of the Atlanta Coalition of Reason want you to know that you have our support with this matter. You acted responsibly in upholding your constitutional duty to maintain a secular government that affords respect to all of your constituents. In contrast, Mr. Cochran demonstrated poor leadership by using his taxpayer-funded government position to advance a religious agenda. We want to thank you for not letting him get away with it.

Sincerely,

The Atlanta Coalition of Reason