

Washington DC Ties Bus Shelter Ads to Rally

On October 19 the Washington D.C. Area Coalition of Reason went public with bus shelter ads along the National Mall near the U.S. Capitol. The distinctive ads, facing outward and thus visible to both street and sidewalk traffic, declared: “Don’t believe in God? Join the club.”



The local ABC TV affiliate covered the story on that evening’s news. This was soon followed by a write-up from a leading *Washington Post* columnist. But most interesting was the conversation that developed on the *Washington Post*’s “On Faith” blog, where numerous panelists from various perspectives weighed in on Washington CoR’s stated intent to tie the ad campaign to the Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert “Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear” being held October 30 (http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/2010/10/rally_for_reason/all.html). In his separate column, Fred Edwards chided those who expressed objections by noting their over sensitivity (http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2010/10/rallying_for_reason_a_little_ath_eism_goes_a_long_way.html) and explained the goals in an piece for the *Guardian* of London (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/oct/21/atheist-bus-shelter-ad>).

UnitedCoR Marches for “Sanity”

On October 30 Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert brought their comedy rally to the National Mall in Washington DC. And they were met by bus loads of people from New York and other cities that created a crowd of over 200,000, about twice what had been expected. Additional portions of the Mall had to be opened up to accommodate all the people and, after it was over, streets were closed to motor traffic for blocks in every direction to allow the masses to depart.

This “sanity” rally not only brought tens of thousands into contact with Washington CoR’s bus shelter ads, it served as an opportunity for the United Coalition of Reason to rally its coalition members to march down to the Mall together. So, from 10:30 to 11:00 AM, CoR people from the D.C. area, Baltimore, and elsewhere gathered at the Navy Memorial under a special banner created just for the purpose. It could be seen by all who came up the escalators from the subway.



CoR people and other freethinkers gather at the Navy Memorial in D.C. (photo by Catherine Blackwell).

Then, at 11:00 AM, those who had gathered marched as a group the two blocks down 7th to the National Mall, stopping along the way to pose for photos next to one of the Washington CoR bus shelters. Then the marchers set off again, chanting “Two-four-six-eight, separate the church and state,” turning many heads in the process. Eventually the group found a place on the rapidly-filling Mall where they could stop and enjoy the rally, which got underway at 12:00 Noon.

Starting about an hour after the rally ended at 3:00 PM, about 150 freethinkers of all stripes converged on the Lauriol Plaza Restaurant across the street from the American Humanist Association. The gathering was hosted by Hemant Mehta, the “Friendly Atheist” blogger, and offered a great opportunity for the godless to come together in community and conviviality.

Arizona CoR Helps Inaugurate Secular Coalition for Arizona

Because the Arizona Coalition of Reason functions statewide, it was relatively easy for CoR Coordinator Matt Schoenley to use it to help mobilize interest in forming the first state chapter of the Secular Coalition for America (SCA). The SCA is the lobbying arm of the nontheistic community and is a coalition of ten national organizations.

The kickoff event for the new state coalition was held October 12. It's mission statement declares: "The Secular Coalition for Arizona is the legislative voice of the Arizona nontheistic community and works to lobby and educate elected officials and bodies in and from the state of Arizona regarding issues important to Arizona nontheists." For more information, visit the Secular Coalition for Arizona website at www.secularAZ.org.



SCA Executive Director Sean Faircloth at the kickoff event launching the Secular Coalition for Arizona.

Replacing Matt at the helm of Arizona CoR is the new coordinator, John Lynn. John had been Matt's "right hand man" and "chief of staff" for Arizona CoR, producing most of the written materials, and now comes to his new role with new ideas for outreach and charitable activities.

UnitedCoR Launches New Facebook Page

For awhile now the UnitedCoR has had a "group" site on Facebook. But it turns out that such sites don't have as many capabilities as standard pages. So UnitedCoR has now invited all its group members to switch over to the new page, indicating that they "Like" it, and is inviting many others to join in. You, too, can connect with the new and more active Facebook presence by going to www.Facebook.com/CoalitionOfReason.

Washington CoR Gets Rolling with Charitable Project

No sooner did the Washington D.C. Area Coalition of Reason have its public launch, and follow up with participation in the Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert rally, but it got down to regular business with its first service project. This was an afternoon volunteer effort on Sunday, November 7, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, at the Capital Area Food Bank's Washington D.C. warehouse. Drawn from the thirteen participating groups in the coalition, the roughly twenty Washington CoR volunteers packed and sorted food items and assisted in other tasks. Mary Bellamy was the event coordinator on site and the volunteers were mobilized by CoR Coordinator Shelley Mountjoy and CoR Web Administrator Don Wharton. The universal reaction from those who participated was very positive with many saying they would like to see this type of thing done again.

CoR Activities around the Nation

San Diego CoR notes on its November calendar that the Freedom From Religion Foundation and American Atheists have declared the week during the Thanksgiving holiday as “a national event for the separation of Church and State.” They add that, “alongside other hallmarks of liberty this annual holiday will provide a platform to rally the troops and celebrate one of democracy's finest contributions to civilization.”

Oklahoma City CoR has been encouraging attendance at Scepticon 3, a conference in Springfield, Missouri, November 19-21. A new area coalition is being formed around this event. Conference details are available online at <http://www.scepticon.org>.

The Northeast Ohio Coalition of Reason arranged group travel to the Stewart-Colbert rally at the end of October. And on October 13, Tulsa CoR hosted Atheist Evangelist Sam Singleton, who is also performing at Scepticon 3.

‘Tis the Season

Obviously, the next major observances on the calendar are the winter holidays surrounding the winter solstice. Whether you celebrate this time as the solstice, HumanLight, or Festivus, this is a perfect opportunity for your coalition to organize a joint activity, or arrange that all the different events of the various groups in your coalition don't all celebrate at the same time—so you can promote attendance at all of them. Happy Holidays!

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