



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • www.ffrf.org

January 15, 2009

COPY

Dr. Bettsey L. Barhorst
President
Madison Area Technical College
3550 Anderson St
Madison WI 53704

Dear Dr. Clark:

I am contacting you on behalf of a concerned Madison Area Technical College (MATC) student and other area taxpayers and members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) about a serious state/church violation occurring at your publicly supported technical college. FFRF is a national organization, which represents more than 13,000 members across the country, including over 1,100 in Wisconsin, and works to enforce the constitutional separation of state and church.

It is our information and understanding that MATC will close for Good Friday, which is April 10th this year. It is listed as "Holiday" on the calendar of events for MATC. It is clear that the intent is to close MATC campuses in observance of a Christian holy day.

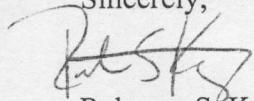
Although there used to be an unconstitutional recognition of "Good Friday" in the state statutes, FFRF sued the State of Wisconsin over this violation and won. Enclosed is the federal Court Order signed by Judge John C. Shabaz, Case No. 95-C-634-S55, dated Feb. 26, 1996. The lawsuit was not appealed. As was pointed out in the legal briefs, "Good Friday" can in no way be construed as secular. In overturning the Good Friday state statute, Judge Shabaz stated that, "[t]he language of Wisconsin's Good Friday holiday law and its undisputed effect of favoring Christianity over other religions leads overwhelmingly to the conclusion that promotion of Christianity is the primary purpose of the law."

MATC is in violation of the 1996 Court Order by closing its campuses on Good Friday. This practice also violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it not only promotes religion over non-religion, but also impermissibly favors Christianity over all other faiths. MATC does not cancel classes for Yom Kippur, Ramadan or any other non-Christian religions, correct?

Enlightened state colleges and universities across the state of Wisconsin, including the University of Wisconsin, remain open on April 10th this year without regard to observing

this Christian holy day. These state colleges and universities are in clear compliance with the Good Friday Court Order. We would appreciate hearing from you by early February about what steps MATC will take to ensure it is in compliance with the Good Friday Court Order.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca S. Kratz", written over a horizontal line.

Rebecca S. Kratz
Staff Attorney

Enclosure