



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

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

January 15, 2009

COPY

Dr. John Clark
President
Mid-State Technical College
500 32nd St N
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494

Dear Dr. Clark:

I am contacting you on behalf of a concerned Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) 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 MSTC will close for Good Friday, which is April 10th this year, but will remain open with classes scheduled as usual for the Martin Luther King Jr., Holiday, a federally recognized secular holiday observed this year on January 19th. In fact, MSTC lists "Good Friday" as a holiday on the 2008-2009 academic calendar, which is given to all students and posted on MSTC's website.

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."

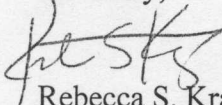
MSTC is in violation of the 1996 Court Order by closing its campuses on Good Friday. This practice also violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it not only promotes religion over non-religion, but also impermissibly favors Christianity over all other faiths. MSTC does not cancel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

the academic calendar distributed to all students and faculty and posted on the college's website, shows that the obvious intent to close in observance of a Christian holy day.

Also unsettling about this practice of closing for a Christian holy day is the fact that MSTC remains open with regularly scheduled classes on the federal holiday commemorating the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This shows preference for a Christian holiday over a federal *secular* holiday. Enlightened colleges and universities across the state of Wisconsin, not to mention across the country, are closed on January 19th this year in observance of this federal *secular* holiday. These colleges and universities also do not close their campuses or cancel their classes for Good Friday.

We would appreciate hearing from you by early February about what steps MSTC will take to ensure it is in compliance with the Good Friday court order.

Sincerely,



Rebecca S. Kratz
Staff Attorney

Enclosure