



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Senator Andrew Lanza Denounces American Atheists' Hateful Times Square Advertisement Saying 'Nobody' Needs 'Christ During Christmas'

ANDREW J LANZA December 13, 2013



Lanza Continues Drive to Remove Malicious Advertisement

Senator Andrew Lanza expressed outrage at a secular activist group, American Atheists, who took aim at the traditional purpose for the holiday season, asking in a new digital billboard in Time Square: “Who needs Christ during Christmas?” They answer the curiosity with a one word answer — “Nobody.”

The controversial activist group unveiled its latest anti-Christmas ad in Times Square along with a press release declaring that “Christmas is better without Christ.”

The digital, lighted billboard measures 40 feet by 40 feet. The group's 15-second ad is running three times every hour and will be shown over 1,000 times in Times Square before Christmas. The group will also unveil three billboards with the same message at Penn Station.

Senator Lanza said, “Just as millions of Americans are preparing to celebrate Christmas, the American Atheists organization has ridiculed the solemn beliefs of millions of New Yorkers.”

“It is our solemn responsibility as Americans to defend each other’s right to believe in God or not, however, I denounce this organization’s lack of decency, civility and kindness to people of faith as expressed on these billboard messages. It seems to me that this is part of a continued “War on Christmas” and also upon the belief and value system of millions of Christian, Jewish and Muslim people who have faith in God. Religious persecution of the kind that similarly lead to the Holocaust began with small baby steps of ridicule and hatred of the religious beliefs of others. The same would be true of expressions of hatred levied upon others because they do not believe.

“I believe that when we see expressions of hatred, we should do something about it. It is why I have hoped that those who live in Manhattan and around Times Square and the community’s political leaders would have decried this hate speech as something not to be tolerated or allowed. I must say, I would like to report that I have since received scores of messages from Manhattan, from every other part of our City, and from across the Country, that religious differences aside, the sign is unkind.”

“I continue to call upon all decent people to send a message loud and clear that there is no room in our society for religious hatred or persecution toward people of faith. Nor should we tolerate religious hatred or persecution against those who do not believe. Hatred of others based upon their beliefs is contrary to what we are as Americans and to the very protections of our Constitution. We should instead celebrate the fact that we live in a country where our rights in this regard are protected. This is what I firmly believe as an American. If you agree that this kind of expression should not be tolerated, sign onto my petition calling for the immediate withdrawal of this advertisement which will be forwarded to the NYC Mayors Office, the NYC Council, the Attorney General’s office and the Times Square merchant community.”

“I have, for the second time, amended the content of this statement. I’ve done so based upon conversations which I have had with callers describing themselves as atheists. They have expressed concern, based upon misinterpretation, that my original statement can be taken as offensive to atheists based upon their beliefs. This is not only the furthest thing from the truth, it is completely contrary to what I have intended to accomplish with my stand. My opposition to the sign has nothing to do with the beliefs of atheists, it has to do with the belief of many that it is hurtful and hateful toward people of faith at precisely the time they are celebrating what they believe. While our constitution protects such unkind statements, so does it protect my right to denounce them. I extend my apologies to those atheists who might have been offended, even if that is by virtue of misunderstanding. I simply believe that it is wrong to do nothing in the face of hatred. I defend the right not to believe as strongly as the right to have faith. I firmly believe, however, that neither should be used to demean the other. What we need is good will toward each other, and I hope this debate and my position has helped people focus upon that.”

Video of the ad is available [here](#).

Video of the actual board as displayed in Times Square is available on [here](#).

Read the American Atheist press release [here](#).