

AMERICAN ATHEISTS, Inc.

<http://www.atheists.org>

<http://www.americanatheist.org>

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CAMPAIGN AD FILMED IN CHURCH DIVISIVE, "CROSSES THE LINE" SAYS ATHEIST GROUP

An Atheist civil rights organization today charged that a partisan campaign ad filmed in a Tennessee Baptist church sends a "divisive" message and is "religionizing" important public policy issues.

The television commercial was filmed on behalf of Democratic candidate Harold Ford, Jr. who is running against Republican Bob Corker. The men are vying for the seat of retiring U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. The race has drawn national attention because the outcome could tip the balance of power in the Senate. Ford's latest ad, though, has ignited controversy because of its message linking religious faith with fitness to hold public office.

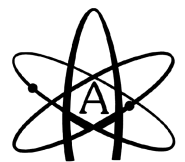
"To our knowledge, this is the first time a partisan political ad has been produced using the backdrop of a church," said Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists. "It's part of a larger and disturbing trend where candidates are invoking religion in order to woo constituencies and win elections."

Johnson added that by "playing the religion card," candidates like Mr. Ford were marginalizing and excluding millions of Atheists, Freethinkers, Secular Humanists and other nonbelievers.

Dave Silverman, Communications Director for American Atheists said that Mr. Ford's ad is more than a simple statement of personal beliefs.

"It's pandering, and it raises serious questions about a candidate who does something like this would represent all of the people in his state if elected, or uphold the separation of church and state."

AMERICAN ATHEISTS is a nationwide movement that defends civil rights for Atheists; works for the total separation of church and state; and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.



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