

AMERICAN ATHEISTS, INC.

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Death of Philip Paulson A Tragic Milepost in Battle to Remove Unconstitutional Christian Cross, Resist Gov't Recalcitrance

AMERICAN ATHEISTS mourns the death of Philip Kevin Paulson at 59, the man who for nearly 18 years fought to remove the Mt. Soledad Christian cross from public land overlooking San Diego, CA.

Paulson was a "foxhole Atheist" who served in Vietnam, and was a committed defender of the principle of separation between church and state. He died Wednesday, October 25, 2006 after a battle with liver cancer. His case has become a landmark battle over the question of whether or not government may permit sectarian religious monuments and symbols on public property. Paulson said that the essence of his case was "equal treatment under the law, and religious neutrality."

Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists, said that Paulson is a hero to Atheists and anyone else who takes a stand on behalf of the First Amendment. "Phil Paulson was passionate about freedom, and opposed to the belief that government should promote religion of any kind. He took on an unpopular battle and stood firm during years of government obfuscation and legal double-talk."

Johnson added that San Diego authorities "did all they could to find a way to keep this unconstitutional and unfair religious monument standing."

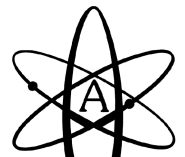
"They tried every trick in their play book, including the bogus assertion that the case had nothing to do with religion, and ended up letting the Mt. Soledad cross be handed over to the federal government in hopes of de-railing the case," said Johnson.

Congress unanimously passed legislation this summer that was signed by President Bush that transferred the Christian cross to the Department of Defense in hopes of preserving it as a "war memorial."

Dave Silverman, Communications Director for American Atheists, said that Paulson's lawsuit is testament "of how one person standing alone can speak to power."

The case continues with a new plaintiff.

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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