

*Ed note: Bernie Moscovitz has sent the following as an email to the addressees below.*

To The Chairman, President and Executive Director of the American Jewish Congress:



Dear Sirs:

I have read, with great dismay, reports that you are considering a lawsuit against my adoptive State of South Carolina because drivers here will be able to have, should they so desire, car license plates featuring a cross and the words "I believe."

You should know that we also have plates that say "In God we Trust"; plates that favor the Clemson Tigers; others that favor the Gamecocks of USC; plates about the value of mountain lions and turtles; plates for rivers and marshes and veterans and heroes and heroines and great writers and, we even have "vanity" plates where we can (and must) actually pay, on an individual basis, to say anything we feel is appropriate about ourselves or our lives or wives or husbands or kids or schools.

And so, we see car tags around here that state things like; "HI MAINT" or 10SNE1 or Go Blue. I suspect, if we wanted to, one of us could even pay for a vanity plate that says IBeLeave. That, gentlemen, is the essence of special license plates, like the one to which you object, or the sports team tags or the environment tags. None of it can happen unless those who want them ante up the bucks for them to be manufactured. That goes for plates that can be made generally available such as "In God We Trust" or the orange Clemson tiger paw; right down to the personalized "vanity" plate that could say AJC if you wanted it to.

Get it? We, the taxpayers of South Carolina are NOT paying for them with our taxes; therefore there is no church and state battle here and the simplest basis of American freedom can be exercised.

But I assume your proposed suit isn't frivolous in your minds, so here are a few observations from one of your kinsmen on the ground, here in the Smiling Faces. Beautiful Places state (that's the slogan on the license plate we get when we pay the property taxes on our cars.

The vast majority of South Carolinians are God-loving Christians embracing daily the values of family, grace, kindness and love. They do "believe" and the cross is an integral part of their lives. These same Christians are unquestionably tolerant, friendly, normal and plainly human with their friends and neighbors of other faiths.

The Citadel, that great military university in Charleston, was graduating Jewish Generals and Colonels in the 1860s while the great liberal institutions of the northeast (Harvard, Yale, McGill (my own alma mater) were enforcing quotas against Jews and African Americans until (in some cases) the late 1950s!

We have a retired 85 year old Cantor in Port Royal who outfitted an old railway caboose as a Holocaust memorial and teachers and kids visit it regularly. That caboose was given to him by a Christian gentleman who wants all generations to know what happened.

This is a state where the sole survivor of the 1972 Munich Massacre of the Israeli Olympic team came to speak in 2006, at the height of the Second Lebanon War, to the Greenville

Jewish Federation. 250 of the total audience of 350 were Christians who came to show solidarity with Israel. They were from every denomination.

Lots of people drive trucks in this part of the world and many of them have the cross symbol, or the Christian fish symbol on them. Other cars and trucks have the fish symbol, but it says Darwin inside the fish. Some even have the Darwin fish swallowing the Christian symbol fish. Neither side is suing. Both have an innate understanding of individual liberty and of free speech. Lots of trucks around here have stickers on them that say "Semper Fi". The United States Marine Corps is a big and positive part of our lives around here. Are you going to sue the Marine Corps (after all, the Armed Services are branches of our Government) because their symbol may be offensive to someone who doesn't like war? Or if an Army veteran says, "I want to see as many Army stickers on trucks as Marines stickers, will you sue? Please; get real.

Go ahead and lobby for plates with the Star of David; or the Islamic Crescent or the Druid pentacles if you like. If enough people want them and come up with the dough, they'll become a reality.

Perhaps you could even lobby for the following plates:

ATHEISTS: No cross; the words "I do NOT believe."

AGNOSTICS: "I'm just not sure."

The exquisite irony in this situation is that the symbol and the "I Believe" statement are expressions neither of oppression nor enslavement, nor anger nor delegitimization of anyone or anything else. Quite the contrary; they are founded on love and honesty and hope. What threat is there in the affirmation of an already widely-held belief?

Between the freedom to sue for the sake of insane political correctness and freedom for those who believe in something proclaiming, publicly, that they do, we should always choose the latter.