



July 27, 2025 AOF meeting - Stewart Thomas describes Rank Choice Voting for Sacramento County

✧ ✧ This Month's Feature Event ✧ ✧

➤ Protecting the American River Parkway

Sunday, August 24, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

AF happily presents **Pete Spaulding** of [American River Trees](https://www.americanrivertrees.org/). Did you know:

- * The American River Parkway is the *only* federal and state-designated wild and scenic US river flowing through a metropolitan area?
- * That designation is now at risk from erosion control efforts by the Corps of Engineers, SAFCA, and the CVFPB?

So how can we achieve flood and erosion protection for 500,000 people without destroying acres of vegetation and an additional 685 trees?

Pete Spaulding has ideas. He will present an overview of efforts to achieve a win-win-win result. Since the fall of 2023, American River Trees has been challenging the erosion control work by the US Army Corps of Engineers on the Lower American River, specifically from Howe Ave east to the Mayhew Drain.

Pete has been one of the residents coordinating the effort. He has a BS and MS in Civil Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and over 40 years of association, program management, and strategic planning experience in energy and transportation. Join us for this presentation. Meanwhile go hug a tree.

Contact for details: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

A no-fee event with free parking. Bring snacks or a beverage to share if you wish, and maybe crinkled bills for the donation jug. AOF will provide cool, clear water.



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie and Discussion at Reason Center

Friday, August 8, 2025, 7 pm – 9 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

Join us for a cozy **in-person Movie Night** at Sacramento's [Reason Center](#), in a quiet room with cushy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. The movie name is a secret because of our [MPLC License](#) and certain legal foderol -- but here's a hint. "A bedridden boy's grandfather reads him the story of a farmboy-turned-pirate who encounters numerous obstacles, enemies and allies in his quest to be reunited with his true love." If you don't get it now, stand still while we slap you.

AOF co-sponsors the Movie Night events. The movie team provides popcorn and other munchies - feel free to bring your own snacks as well. We also encourage a post-film discussion, which makes this educational if you stretch the word. No fee to attend. But you know, Reason Center always appreciates donations. We're just saying.

Contact for details: See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/>

Free Movie Night is a joint venture of AOF and Reason Center. Suggest your own fave film for next time!



➤ Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, August 16, 2025, 9 am – 11 am

Location: Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

Out on Highway 99, for two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, runs a lonely stretch -- *our* stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. We have cared for it, nurtured it, rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. One of our successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So, join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5 past the Natomas area. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, or somewhere near it.

This is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home. And please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

Contact for details: 916-805-9337 (Don Knutson), or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

In case of rain, fog, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don Knutson).



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming non-AOF Events ✧ ✧

Some local *non*-AOF events worthy of your attention. We won't list them all this time, just highlights. For more, please check the calendar links below.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

Saturday, August 9, 2025, 10 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, see details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/310002710/>.

Sunday, August 11, 2025, 9:30 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWmTanVP7>, details <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/309548205/>.

Sunday, August 17, 2025, 9:30 am – 11 am, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmkC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/310119201/>.

Like to hang with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us for our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We don't blaspheme all that much, but dark mutterings may emerge ... be warned. A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP (see the links).



➤ Sunday Assembly & Potluck

Sunday, August 10, 2025, 11 am – 1 pm (doors open 10:30am, presentation at 11)

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

Sunday Assembly is a secular celebration of *you*, with music, readings, food and speakers, plus entertainment for children. We will have a speaker, a short Doing Your Best presentation by a member, a time for members to share their Milestones, and a potluck. Please bring a dish to share unless you are a newcomer. Donuts and coffee are provided.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/308719245/>.

➤ LiteraCheer

Saturday, August 16, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>

Reason Center continues our in-person "Literacheer"

📖 events! These occur in our library's seating areas.

Come and enjoy the weekend afternoon by discussing books with fellow thinkers.

Everyone will get a chance to share their ideas about any book of their choice—any genre, fiction or nonfiction. It's a great way to keep abreast of what like-minded people are reading.

👉 **Follow common sense & decency in choice of books, avoid marketing pitches, and generally be nice. Focus on the "cheer" part of the event.**

👉 **Optional to bring snacks to add to our free treats. Enough to share is all we ask.**

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/310070801/>.



➤ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, August 17, 2025, 12 pm – 2 pm

Location: Mast Coffee, 1430 28th Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/WwGCC8LN87biHXM58>.

The history of ancient Christianity is endlessly fascinating. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson are facilitating this meet up to review the history of Rome, religions of the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions, biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and many other related topics. If you ever wanted to sort out Eusebius from Clement, or Constantine from Diocletian, or the Vulgate from the Septuagint, then this group is for you. Previous biblical knowledge is not required to participate.

We will be meeting every third Sunday. Each meeting a specific topic will be covered. Check details to find the current readings and topics of discussion.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/310070669/>.

➤ Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club

Saturday, August 23, 2025, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm (*online meeting*)

An online book discussion open to all. The topic will be **My Brother's Name Is Kenny: The Greatest True Hip-Hop Story Ever Told**, by Kenny Parker. RSVP at the Details link below, and you will see how to attend.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/309724805/>.

➤ Atheists Community relevant video clips & discussion

Monday, September 1, 2025, 7:30 pm - 10:30 pm

Location: Visit <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81807086862?pwd=ZjUyamt1b2dlc1N5bEZ6Q0w1Um00QT09> at meeting time.

An educational and entertaining teleconference about Atheism, Logic, Reason, Thoughtfulness, debunking conspiracy theories - accentuated by videos and your presence.

What to expect: Discussion sparked by short videos about atheism, religion, science, current events, critical thinking, comedy, life hacks, health and beyond, followed by moderated discussions.

Details at: <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/308946338/>.

➤ More Events – So many Calendars!

Really, there's more. And plans change, because we're human. So don't trust the list above. To learn of all those other events, please bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>

- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Compassionate Humanists of Roseville, <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

But to continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To join or donate, visit ReasonCenter.org.

Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

We suggest it meekly. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.

✧ ✧ **Secular Holidays this Month** ✧ ✧

➤ **World Friendship Day**

Sunday, August 3, 2025

[World Friendship Day](#) (or International Friendship Day) is the first Sunday of August, which of course floats, like the friendship in our lives, and can be any day from Aug 1 through Aug 7.

We humans are social creatures. We recognize the value of friendship, the invisible thread connecting us. In 1935 the US Congress proclaimed World Friendship Day as a time to celebrate this humanist sentiment.

Since then other nations across the world have adopted the noble idea of Friendship Day, honoring it on the first Sunday of August every year, making it a true international celebration.

How can you acknowledge Friendship Day? Call on your friends, invite them for food, embrace them, exchange cards and flowers, gift them with a [friendship band or bracelet](#), or mark the day with programs celebrating human camaraderie.

Note, some groups and nations celebrate Friendship at other times of the year, with different customs and different emphasis. For instance:

- National Friendship Day is the first Sunday in August
- Women's Friendship Day, the *third* Sunday in August
- International Friendship Month is February
- Old Friends / New Friends Week is the third week of May

What is remarkably constant amid this diversity is idea of the celebration of our connections. Everywhere, people express love for their friends and cherish their presence in life. For more information on this secular holiday, click [here](#).



➤ **Ingersoll Day**

Monday, August 5, 2025

Ingersoll Day marks the birthday of [Robert Green Ingersoll](#), honoring the life and work of one of the most noted freethinkers in US history. Ingersoll was also the most successful orator in nineteenth century America, heard by more Americans than any human before the advent of motion pictures and radio. A leading political figure, he campaigned against slavery and for the rights of women and minorities. They called him the "Great Agnostic." He attracted huge crowds to lectures that criticized religion and promoted freethought. Walt Whitman and Mark Twain greatly admired him.

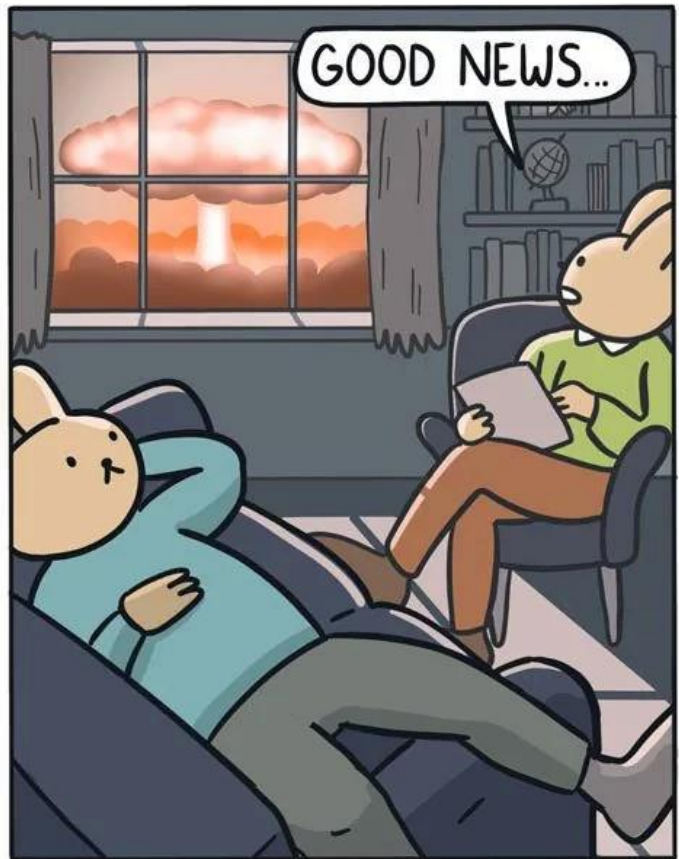
Celebrate Ingersoll Day with a visit to [the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum](#), or by reading excerpts from [the Complete Works of Ingersoll](#).

"When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world, not even in infinite space. I was free -- free to think, to express my thoughts -- free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses, free to spread imagination's wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself . . . I was free! I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds."

-- Robert Green Ingersoll, "Why I Am an Agnostic"



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"One could not think of Aristotle or Beethoven multiplying 3,472,701 by 99,999 without making a mistake, nor could one think of him remembering the range of this or that railway share for two years, or the number of ten-penny nails in a hundred weight, or the freight on lard from Galveston to Rotterdam. And by the same token one could not imagine him expert at billiards, or at grouse-shooting, or at golf, or at any other of the idiotic games at which what are called successful men commonly divert themselves. In his great study of British genius, Havelock Ellis found that an incapacity for such petty expertness was visible in almost all first rate men. They are bad at tying cravats. They do not understand the fashionable card games. They are puzzled by book-keeping. They know nothing of party politics. In brief, they are inert and impotent in the very fields of endeavour that see the average men's highest performances, and are easily surpassed by men who, in actual intelligence, are about as far below them as the Simidae."

— H.L. Mencken, *In Defense of Women*, 1918

This Month in Religious History

August 3, 1643

Brian Cansfield, a Jesuit priest, died in Yorkshire, England, after being jailed and beaten by Protestant authorities. His ordeal began when the wife of a local judge converted to Catholicism, causing her enraged husband to send priest-hunters searching throughout the shire and vowing to draw and quarter whichever priest had converted her. Cansfield was celebrating mass when he was seized, pummeled heartily, and imprisoned in a damp dungeon in York Castle. There he was starved and continually tortured—until his torturers declared that he was the wrong priest after all, and so released him. He died anyway.

August 6, 1166

Pope Alexander III sent an emissary to England, demanding to know how and why the Bishop of Coventry had assigned priesthoods at several churches to boys under the age of 10. The bishop replying that there was no church law forbidding such a practice. The Pope admonished the bishop, then directed that “competent vicars” would be appointed to run these churches until the boy reached an appropriate age, which he fixed at 14. Later popes would think this decree too strict, and reduce the age to 7.

August 8, circa 1400 BCE

After spending forty days spying out the Promised Land, twelve spies sent by Moses returned. They brought back the produce of the land, including a cluster of grapes so large it took two men to carry it. Those were some honkin’ grapes. (Num 13:21-25)

August 11, circa 41 AD

Mary, the mother of Jesus, died this day according to tradition. Mary would have been called Miriam by her family and friends. Last words are unrecorded.

August 15, 1790

The Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, turned to greet a group of touring federal officials, including the President, after which George Washington gave his famous assurance of religious freedom for the Jews, promising “the stock of Abraham” that America would give “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.” Washington and his cabinet then roasted a pig.

August 20, 1787

Charles Pinckney of South Carolina proposed the language in Article 6 of the Constitution prohibiting a religious test for public office. So we never got to test him to see if he’s really a Christian.



California Freethought Day

Exhibiting and Sponsoring

Just a reminder that this year’s event will be **October 12** (Sunday) with a reception the evening before. Please mark your calendar.

The speaker lineup, still under development, will include acclaimed podcaster Seth Andrews (*The Thinking Atheist*).

Sponsorship packages are the same as last year and tabling is still free for groups who share our values. But you must sign up to table. For details, see <https://freethoughtday.org/support/table-and-sponsor/>, or go to <https://freethoughtday.org/about/contact/> with any questions.



Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President: Prolific Pamella Rivera
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Event Coordinator: Pamella Rivera (again)
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Facebook page & Advisor: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:
Fran Evanisko, David Herbert, Roger Zabkie

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF’s Facebook pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

AOF Mission Statement:

“The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.”

What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. “... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries” (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Be respectful, and you may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.