



FACT SHEET
***American Atheists v. City of Detroit Downtown
Development Agency***

ABOUT American Atheists v. City of Detroit Downtown Development Agency

St. John's Episcopal Church entered into a contract with the City of Detroit Downtown Development Agency to make exterior improvements to its property in order to enhance the city's image prior to the 2006 Super Bowl and to spur economic development downtown. The contract called for the city to reimburse half of the expenses, up to \$180,000. American Atheists filed suit, and the city subsequently withheld reimbursement to the church, which had already secured a loan and had completed the improvements.

***CURRENT STATUS OF American Atheists v. City of Detroit Downtown Development Agency
AS OF 3/4/09***

In August 2007, a federal district court ruled that the church should receive most of the reimbursement promised by the city, but not the entire reimbursement. ADF attorneys appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit in order to secure the entire reimbursement for the church. American Atheists also appealed.

FOCUS OF HEARING – WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The U.S. Constitution does not require government to be hostile to churches by excluding them from neutrally available benefits. An adverse ruling could empower groups such as American Atheists to attack churches and religious organizations that receive government funds for non-religious purposes.

CONTACT

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ABOUT ADF

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994, ADF employs a unique combination of [strategy, training, funding, and litigation](#) to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

ABOUT Dale Schowengerdt

Dale Schowengerdt serves as legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund out of its Kansas City Regional Service Center.