

A silhouette of a nativity scene against a starry night sky. It includes Mary, Joseph, the infant Jesus, a shepherd with a staff, a cow, a donkey, and a lamb.

HOW TO PUT UP A NATIVITY SCENE IN YOUR TOWN

Do you want to help restore faith in your town? One way you can do that this holiday season is by requesting that a nativity scene be displayed on public property. This simple guide can help you identify practical steps you can take to commemorate “the reason for the season” with nativity scenes or other religious symbols.

NOTE: This does not constitute official legal advice.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Anytime you are interacting with government officials and decision-makers, it is important that you conduct yourself in a respectful, professional manner and that you adhere to the necessary procedures and protocols. As representatives of our respective faith groups, treating people with the utmost respect is essential. Likewise, understanding and following the necessary procedures and protocols—such as deadlines, required forms, or fees—is crucial to your success.

These three simple steps—Research, Request, Restore—serve as a guide to displaying a nativity scene on public property.

STEP 1: RESEARCH WHAT IS REQUIRED TO DISPLAY A NATIVITY SCENE

- Are there local laws, ordinances, or regulations that govern public displays?
- What is the process for requesting that a Nativity Scene be displayed?
- Is there a deadline by which requests must be submitted? Who is the approval authority? Are there fees or other costs?
- Are there designated areas for public displays?
- Are there limitations on size, location, duration?
- Has your town historically (even if not recently) displayed a Nativity Scene or Christmas Tree? If so, what were the circumstances? When and why did it stop?
- Has your town ever allowed other displays on public property? If so, were they religious or non-religious? Temporary or permanent?
- Determine whether this will be a government-owned display, or a privately-sponsored display that the government permits.

STEP 2: REQUEST THAT YOUR TOWN DISPLAY A NATIVITY SCENE

- Ensure you have all necessary forms, documentation, fees and other requirements prepared.
- Ensure you address your request to the proper recipients, paying special attention to titles and spelling.
- Ensure your request conforms to all legal and administrative requirements.
- Submit your request in a professional manner.
- If your display is privately-sponsored, ensure you adhere to the rules and regulations for how long the display may remain and by when it must be removed.

STEP 3: RESTORE FAITH IN YOUR TOWN!

- Once the display is installed, please take pictures and share them with us at rfia@firstliberty.org.
- Document your journey by maintaining detailed notes, archiving correspondence, and taking photos/videos so that you or future generations may continue the practice for many years to come.

NOTE: This resource is merely intended to serve as a guide. It does not and cannot serve as legal advice. Each community is unique. If you have additional questions, encounter legal issues, or need support, please reach out to us at rfia@firstliberty.org.



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