

## Local groups urge nontheist inclusion in interfaith response

The Secular Coalition for Massachusetts and the Boston Atheists have reached out to the Governor's Office of Community Affairs, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, and the Mayor's Office, but as yet have no word on how or whether nontheist members of the community will be represented at this morning's interfaith service in memory of the Boston Marathon bombing victims, where President Obama will be speaking.

"It won't be for lack of trying that we aren't represented in the collective response to this tragedy," said Zachary Bos, co-chair of the Secular Coalition for Massachusetts, and State Director for American Atheists. "We know that historically it's been easier to engage with people who are religiously-identifying and more likely to be organized. That is why we've been pro-active in calling elected officials and reaching out to religious colleagues, to find a way to be involved. If anything, the events of the past week tell us that we should be cultivating these relationships anyway, so that when tragedy does strike we are ready to respond immediately, a community of different philosophies united in common cause.

"We're telling them we're here and available to stand beside religious leaders at any interfaith event, so that these public responses can be representative of Bostonians of all ethical traditions. We seek to stand with our neighbors in showing compassion and resolve in the face of terrorism.

"This bombing has affected people of many different faiths and none. We're doing all we can to give civic leaders the chance to make sure any interfaith event is truly inclusive."

The attitudes of these leaders are reflected by national secular organizations.

The Boston Atheists community group is a local affiliate of American Atheists, whose President David Silverman said, "These tragedies affect all citizens, including atheists—the fastest growing religious demographic in New England. We deserve not to be shut out of the mourning process. We deserve a place at the table, and at the ceremony."

The Secular Coalition for Massachusetts is a state chapter of the Secular Coalition for America. Edwina Rogers, Executive Director of that organization, said the nontheist community is eager to be a part of the interfaith services and other events honoring the victims—not only to support and represent several of the victims who are part of the nontheist community in Boston, but also in a show of solidarity with the greater-Boston community as a whole.

*The **Boston Atheists** is the largest atheist membership organization in New England, and one of the most active secular organizations in the Boston area. We provide opportunities for friendship, education, and community for hundreds of local atheists and, as a local affiliate of American Atheists, advocate for the advancement of reality-based worldviews. @bostonatheists | meetup.com/bostonatheists | [bostonatheists.org](http://bostonatheists.org)*

*The mission of the **Secular Coalition for Massachusetts**, a state chapter of the Secular Coalition for America, is to increase visibility of and respect for nontheistic viewpoints, and to strengthen the secular character of our government as the best guarantee of freedom for all Americans. @secularmass | facebook.com/pages/Secular-Coalition-for-Massachusetts | [secular.org/states/chapters/Massachusetts](http://secular.org/states/chapters/Massachusetts)*

**See also:** <http://secular.org/news/secular-coalition-our-hearts-go-out-bombing-victims-boston-marathon>

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