

Thomas More Society: Nativity Scene Returns to Rhode Island State Capitol Rotunda

([Thomas More Society](#)) – A traditional nativity scene has returned to the Rhode Island State Capitol Rotunda this Christmas season. A public opening ceremony unveiled the creche, which is displayed by the Rhode Island Joy to the World Nativity Lighting Committee for the sixth consecutive year, in honor of the celebration of the birth of Christ. The Christmas nativity scene, depicting the newborn Christ child lying in the manger, opened on December 5 and is scheduled to remain at the statehouse through the traditional *12 Days of Christmas*, ending on January 7, 2018.

Former Providence mayoral candidate Christopher Young and his wife, Kara, a former candidate for lieutenant governor, spoke at the unveiling and, joined by their young daughter Mary, also led Christmas caroling. The Youngs serve as co-chairs of the Rhode Island Joy to the World Nativity Lighting and Scene Committee.

“The light of the world, the Christ Jesus, has come to save us and we invite everyone to come celebrate his birth! We are very pleased to be exercising our First Amendment rights by expressing our religious faith in public,” stated the Youngs. “It is a great honor to celebrate Christmas with a nativity scene in the Rhode Island State Capitol. A joyous Christmas to all!”

The civically-involved couple added some thoughts on their personal motivation. “Shining God’s light into the Rhode Island Statehouse – the place where laws are made that affect the lives of every Rhode Islander – is especially important this year. God chose to have Jesus born into the world as a defenseless baby. This reminds us of the dignity and value of every unborn child. In Rhode Island, 5,000 of these babies are killed by abortion annually.”

“The nativity scene in the state capitol rotunda represents constitutionally-protected free speech and expression of religious faith by private citizens in a designated public forum,” explained Tom Brejcha, Thomas More Society President and Chief Counsel. “The government is neither censor nor endorser of such religious speech. In the capitol rotunda, where political rallies are routinely held during government sessions, the government is merely the gatekeeper upholding free speech.” He added that this nativity scene is privately funded and sponsored, bereft of any government aid or endorsement, and therefore, “clothed and armored with the full protection of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.”

The Thomas More Society provides pro bono legal counsel for the Rhode Island Joy to the World Nativity Lighting and Scene Committee, Kara Young, Christopher Young and the American Nativity Scene, which has placed manger displays in public places in 21 different states. The Thomas More Society has co-sponsored private nativity displays in the state capitol buildings of Illinois, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Iowa,

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California, Massachusetts and Texas, and in front of the Governor's Mansion in Oklahoma. Additional manger scenes will be displayed this year at state capitols in Annapolis, Maryland and Augusta, Maine.

The Rhode Island State Capitol Rotunda nativity scene is presented by the Thomas More Society, an anonymous donor, and members of the Rhode Island Joy to the World Nativity Lighting and Scene Committee.