

Leading church-state separation advocate to retire

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [May 10, 2017](#) issue

Barry W. Lynn, an outspoken champion for church-state separation, has announced he will retire at the end of 2017.

“The last 25 years have been amazing,” Lynn said in a statement about his pending departure as executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Lynn, 68, a lawyer and ordained United Church of Christ minister, started at Americans United in 1992. Previously, he worked for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Neal Jones, president of Americans United’s trustee board, credited Lynn with increasing the organization’s budget fourfold and raising its presence in the grass roots and the media.

“He worked overtime revitalizing Americans United by traveling the country, speaking, writing, testifying before Congress, debating opponents of church-state separation in the media and overseeing AU’s budget and growth,” Jones said.

He said the board is searching for a new executive director as the organization celebrates its 70th anniversary.

For over a quarter century, Lynn’s name was often synonymous with liberal advocacy for secularism in the public square.

Lynn and AU joined other groups in a suit to remove the Ten Commandments monument installed in an Alabama state judicial building. In another suit, Lynn helped halt the teaching of intelligent design in Dover, Pennsylvania, public schools.

As the cabinet of the Trump administration was taking shape, Lynn protested the appointment of Jeff Sessions as attorney general. In 1999, Sessions and other Republican senators sought to investigate Americans United, claiming its education of churches about the legalities of partisan politicking amounted to voter intimidation. —Religion News Service

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