

News Release

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Mayor Berry says Darwin Day "Too Controversial"

Mayor Berry will not be issuing a proclamation to declare February 12 as "Darwin Day" in Albuquerque. The decision was relayed in a phone call only days after submission of the request by the Humanist Society of New Mexico (HSNM). In speaking to Daniel Marzec, who handles mayoral proclamations, HSNM Secretary Dr. Jerry Gilbert was told that the mayor felt that proclaiming Darwin Day would be "controversial."

The Humanist Society of New Mexico submitted their request and proposed wording for the proclamation with many endorsements from other freethinker groups in Albuquerque. The almost immediate rejection has come as a surprise and disappointment to all.

"The Humanist Society of NM sees Darwin's birthday anniversary as an opportunity to promote education and celebrate the contributions of science to human development," said HSNM President Zelda Gatuskin on the group's website. "We live in a

secular society, which is the ideal of the U.S. Constitution. In the objective measures of science, we are able to find a common basis on which to address the complex problems of a complex civilization."

"Charles Darwin is an inspiring figure," Gatuskin continued. "The Mayor, in sparing himself an imagined angry backlash to a rather mild statement, has deprived the City of an opportunity to encourage our young people to study, innovate and achieve, and to acknowledge Albuquerque's fine research and educational facilities."

Despite the Mayor's refusal to issue a proclamation, there are still celebrations planned for February 12th in honor of Darwin's birthday. HSNM will join with Freedom From Religion, Albuquerque, the UNM Secular Student Alliance and others to honor the legacy of Charles Darwin with speeches and videos in the UNM SUB ballroom at 7:00 PM on Tuesday February 12. The event is free and open to the public.

Many of the groups involved have expressed plans to continue to ask the Mayor for Darwin Day proclamations in the future.

The proposed proclamation wording can be found online at:

<http://hsnm.wordpress.com/2013/02/01/mayor-rejects-darwin-day-proclamation/>