

Satanists briefly erect statue outside Arkansas Capitol

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)—A group from The Satanic Temple temporarily erected a goat-headed, winged statue on the Arkansas State Capitol grounds Aug. 16 to protest the Ten Commandments monument already placed there.

“If you’re going to have one religious monument up, then it should be open to others, and if you don’t agree with that, then let’s just not have any at all,” said Satanic Arkansas cofounder Ivy Forrester, a rally organizer, according to the Associated Press.

The 7.5-foot-tall statue of Baphomet, which features the devil in goat form seated and surrounded by smiling children, was removed later that day because a 2017 state law requires legislative sponsorship for a monument to be considered.

“The extremist group that has targeted our state again today came and spoke against the Ten Commandments monument during our public meetings and sought for a sponsor of a bill to erect their profane statue. They never had any takers,” said Arkansas Sen. Jason Rapert, who sponsored the Ten Commandments monument. “The process was open, and they failed to convince any of the 135 legislators to sponsor a bill to carry out their idea.”

But the group said they will continue to fight for the Ten Commandments to be removed or for equal consideration to be given to all religious groups. Both the Arkansas affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Freedom from Religion Foundation [filed separate lawsuits](#) earlier this year, asserting the monument violates the Establishment Clause of the First

Amendment.

About 150 people gathered for the peaceful Aug. 16 rally to protest the Ten Commandments monument, while counter-protesters stood nearby holding signs with Bible verses and occasionally singing songs.

Oklahoma faced the same type of battle in 2014 when The Satanic Temple, based in Salem, Mass., wanted to donate a Baphomet statue for display on the Oklahoma State Capitol lawn. In 2012, Rep. Mike Ritze had donated a Ten Commandments monument that was installed on the Capitol grounds.

A motorist—later identified as Michael Tate Reed—rammed his car into the Oklahoma Ten Commandments monument in 2014, but a replacement monument was installed. However, the [Oklahoma Supreme Court](#) ultimately ruled the monument violated the constitution, and it was removed.

The Satanic group then set its eye on the Ten Commandments monument in Arkansas, according to Lucien Grieves with The Satanic Temple.

In 2017, Reed allegedly destroyed [Arkansas' Ten Commandments monument](#) in the same way as he did in Oklahoma, less than 24 hours after it was installed. The monument was replaced in April this year. A circuit [judge acquitted Reed](#), who had been charged with first-degree criminal mischief, citing grounds of mental disease or defect.

With additional reporting by Managing Editor Ken Camp.