



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 3, 2024

Don Wildmon, Founder of the American Family Association, Passes at Age 85

The American Family Association (AFA) [announced last week](#) that its founder, Donald Wildmon, had passed away at the age of 85.

A United Methodist Church pastor of a small church in Southaven, Mississippi, Wildmon was trying to find something suitable on TV for his four children to watch in December 1976. He found nothing appropriate. But rather than dismissing the failure and ignoring the impact anti-Biblical programming would have on his children, Wildmon turned off the TV.

He then urged his congregation to do the same, and the American Family Association was born. The local boycott got legs with national attention and Wildmon left the ministry in 1977 and moved to Tupelo, Mississippi, to start the National Federation of Decency, the AFA's predecessor.

The fledgling organization of some 1,400 members boycotted Sears in the Spring of 1978 for sponsoring *All in the Family*, *Charlie's Angels*, and *Three's Company*. To his surprise and delight, Sears pulled its sponsorship of the latter two programs in the face of the negative national attention it received.

Refining the strategy of the boycott, Wildmon's organization targeted the owners of the 7-Eleven convenience store chain for selling "adult" magazines. It pulled them from its chain of stores.

Wildmon's AFA grew to the point where its email activism — "Action Alerts" — urging its members to protest through letters and boycotts, now reaches an estimated 3.4 million supporters. Its monthly magazine, the *AFA Journal*, has 180,000 subscribers, and in 2020 the group's annual revenue topped \$21 million.

In addition to its activism through letters and boycotts, Wildmon's group, now headed by his son Tim, reviews the content of prime-time television shows, categorizing them based on the presence of profanity, sex, violence, homosexuality, substance abuse, and anti-Christian content. It lists the advertisers of each show, urging its members to express their concerns about the shows they are sponsoring.

The list of companies the AFA has boycotted is impressive, and so are some of its victories. Their targets have included 7-Eleven, Burger King, Calvin Klein, Carl's Jr., Ford, Hallmark Cards, Time Warner, DreamWorks, Procter & Gamble, and the Walt Disney Company.

During the summer of 1993, the AFA purchased full-page ads in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and



YouTube
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the *Los Angeles Times* protesting the sexual and violent content of the upcoming ABC police drama *NYPD Blue*. It urged that its ABC affiliates not to run the drama, and a quarter of them didn't.

In 1996, the AFA launched a boycott against the Walt Disney Company when it began offering benefits to "married" same-sex employees. That boycott lasted during Disney CEO Michael Eisner's reign and ended when he left the company. Said Tim Wildmon at the time, "We feel [that] after nine years of boycotting Disney we have made our point."

In 2003 the AFA, along with the American Decency Association, Focus on the Family, and Citizens for Community Values, lobbied and boycotted Abercrombie & Fitch over its inclusion of "blatant pornography" in its quarterly catalog. In December, the company pulled its Christmas catalog from all of its stores.

In 2005 the AFA boycotted the Ford Motor Company for advertising its vehicles in gay magazines, for donating to gay rights groups, and sponsoring gay pride celebrations. Ford caved, temporarily, until pressure from the AFA's targets forced Ford to violate its agreement with the AFA.

In November 2009, the AFA called for a boycott of The Gap, Inc., over its failure to mention "Christmas" in its television advertising campaigns. The Gap revised those campaigns to include the word "Christmas."

The AFA branched out into other media, producing a video in 2007 titled "The Day They Kicked God Out of the Schools," and in 2008 one titled "Speechless: Silencing the Christians."

All of this incurred the wrath of the far-left Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which first accused the AFA of using "hate speech" to promote its message and agenda, and then designating it as a "hate group." It claimed the group earned the upgrade due to its "propagation of known falsehoods and demonizing propaganda."

AFA President Tim Wildmon said, in noting his father's passing, that "My father was a man with great conviction and vision. He knew how important it was for Christians to remain firmly entrenched in their faith in the face of an openly immoral society."

Tony Perkins, head of the Family Research Council, added, "[Don] wasn't fazed by criticism because he was not interested in the accolades of man: he was focused on making sure the cultural forces of the country didn't prevent or inhibit the saving message of the Gospel."

Wildmon himself made it clear during his lifetime just where his priorities lay: "God does not require that we be successful. He only requires that we be faithful. Whether or not we are successful isn't always within our determination. Being faithful is."



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