



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Capitol Building, Room 332

Senate District 21
Jefferson City, MO 65101

For the Week of:
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Wishing You and Your Loved Ones A Merry Christmas

Around this time of year, we hear numerous sounds that remind us that Christmas is right around the corner — from the ringing of a volunteer’s bell for the Salvation Army’s Red Kettle Christmas Campaign to the various ways we greet people during the holiday season.

We often share our holiday greetings with good intentions to family, friends, and even strangers we come across during our day-to-day activities. However, some question if the use of “Merry Christmas” is appropriate for members of state government. I’d like to remind those that these time-honored words have a significant and historical foundation.

Christmas has been celebrated since the 4th century (approximately 300 AD). The first known usage of this greeting (“Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year”) was in an informal letter written by an English admiral in 1699. The same phrase appeared in the first Christmas card which was produced in England in 1843. The greeting was also included in the popular carol “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” That same year, Charles Dickens popularized the phrase “Merry Christmas” in *A Christmas Carol*. And in the American poet Clement Moore’s “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” he ended the famous poem with “Merry Christmas to all, and to all, a good night.”

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Many people choose to go the route of saying “Happy Holidays” and “Seasons Greetings.” Advocates of these alternative phrases say they are inclusive as well as inoffensive and do not give precedence to one religion or occasion. Critics say these phrases diminish the role of Christianity in Christmas. And some are neither advocates nor critics and find the controversy silly.

While you ponder how you will greet others this holiday season, I would like share with you what Christmas means to me. Far too often we get carried away with the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, with many focusing on decking their house with the latest and greatest in decorations, sending out Christmas cards updating your loved ones with the year’s events, and exchanging gifts among friends and family members.

To me, Christmas stands for the day God sent us our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it stands for our Lord’s atonement and grace that will save those who believe, and it stands for God’s greatest sacrifice — His Son’s life for you and me.

One popular Web site mentions more than 40 alternative ways to deliver a festive holiday greeting. However, I will not check my religious views at the door. So, on behalf of Sue Ellen, myself, and our family, I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay. If you have questions or comments about any issue, please call my office toll free (866) 768-3987 or send me an e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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