

Freethought Today

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FFRF, IRS poised to settle church politicking suit

The Freedom From Religion Foundation and the Internal Revenue Service are poised to resolve FFRF's closely watched federal lawsuit challenging the IRS's non-enforcement of anti-electioneering restrictions by tax-exempt churches. The expected settlement would be a major coup for FFRF, a state/church watchdog and the nation's largest freethought association, now topping 21,000 members.

FFRF and the IRS filed an agreement July 17 to dismiss the lawsuit voluntarily, after communications from the IRS that it no longer has a policy of non-enforcement against churches. However, the agreement is being disputed by an obscure Milwaukee-area church, Holy Cross Anglican Church, which is intervening in the case and is represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

The settlement would allow FFRF to voluntarily dismiss its lawsuit "without prejudice," meaning FFRF can renew it if the IRS reverts to its previous inaction. As of press time, District Judge Lynn Adelman of Milwaukee, hadn't

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FFRF annual staff pic

The federal courthouse in Madison, Wis., is two blocks from FFRF headquarters. Front, left are Sam Erickson, graphic design intern; Dayna Long, administrative assistant; Lisa Strand, director of operations; Lauryn Seering, publicist; Liz Cavell, attorney; Katie Daniel, bookkeeper; Chelsea Culver, student staffer; Dan Barker, co-president; Jackie Douglas, director of membership; and Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president.

Back, left are Rebecca Markert, senior attorney; Aaron Loudenslager, legal intern; Bill Dunn, Freethought Today editor; Scott Colson, IT manager; Todd Peissig, board member and volunteer; Neal Fitzgerald, legal intern; Sam Grover, attorney; Noah Bunnell, editorial intern; Patrick Elliott, attorney; and Andrew Seidel, attorney. (Photo: Andrew Seidel)

Watchdog trio challenges Michigan mayor's veto of atheist display

The Freedom from Religion Foundation, American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed a joint federal lawsuit July 23 on behalf of FFRF member Douglas Marshall, contesting the ban of a "reason station" in a city hall atrium where the city has allowed a "prayer station."

Since 2008, the city of Warren, Mich., has allowed Tabernacle Church, a Church of God congregation, to set up the prayer station, in which volunteers distribute religious pamphlets, pray with passersby and promote their religious beliefs. The lawsuit doesn't seek to remove the prayer station but asks the court to order the city to treat believers and nonbelievers equally.

When Marshall, a Warren resident, asked to set up a reason station in April for two days a week, he was denied a permit. According to the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, Marshall and other volunteers who operate the reason station would offer philosophical discussions with people who express an interest in secularism.

Upon receiving news of the lawsuit,



Warren Mayor Fouts, who compared atheists to Nazis and KKK members.



FFRF member Doug Marshall

Fouts told The Associated Press: "The city has certain values that I don't believe are in general agreement with having an atheist station, nor in general agreement with having a Nazi station or Ku Klux Klan station." He added that a reason station "will not contribute to community values or helping an individual out."

In his rejection letter, Mayor James Fouts wrote: "To my way of thinking, your group is strictly an anti-religion group intending to deprive all organized religions of their constitutional freedoms or at least discourage the practice of religion. The City of War-

ren cannot allow this."

"Our Warren member simply wants the same access to the atrium that has been granted to others, including those who operate the prayer station," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "Regardless of one's viewpoint, there's no legally justifiable reason to deny Douglas Marshall his First Amendment rights."

Dan Korobkin, ACLU of Michigan deputy legal director, said, "Once the government opens public space for use by private groups, it cannot pick and choose who can use the space based on the content of their message or whether public officials agree with that message. The city cannot allow speech supportive of religion and reject speech supportive of atheism."

"The city has an obligation to serve all members of the community equally, regardless of their faith or their lack of faith," added Alex Luchenitser, Americans United associate legal director.

"The government can't simply silence private speakers whenever it dislikes their message," said Daniel Mach, director of the ACLU Program on

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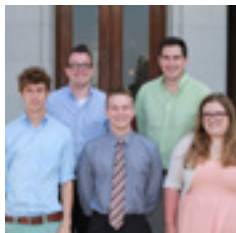
Bobby 'Sugar' Hinds living the sweet life

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FFRF's legal
team has
many state/
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victories

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FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott's "testimonial."

Come out of the Closet, Freethinkers!

Become part of FFRF's newest "Out of the Closet, Freethinkers" campaign! You're cordially invited to record a brief (60 seconds or less) video of yourself explaining why you're a non-believer or giving your "freethought testimonial." First upload your video at YouTube, then submit it for approval so FFRF can post it at its website. The video project began two years ago, but has delayed for technical reasons.

In early August, FFRF is launching the third prong of its "Out of the Clos-

et" campaign. FFRF first launched billboards featuring members and their favorite slogans. Due to the popularity of the campaign but financial limitations, FFRF next devised an elegant app allowing freethinkers to create their own "virtual billboard" at ffrf.org/out/, which can be used on Facebook. Go to ffrf.org/out-video/ to view FFRF staff and volunteer videos and for full instructions on how to participate. There's power in numbers, and on YouTube!

FFRF, IRS to settle suit

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rled on the agreement.

"We're proud that FFRF's litigation should ensure that the IRS will now resume enforcing the law, and go after churches which abuse their tax-exempt privilege by attempting to illegally influence the outcome of elections," said FFRF Co-President Dan Barker. "Otherwise, churches will become unaccountable PACs, congregations could turn into political wards, and donations to the collection box could be used for political purposes. FFRF's litigation will help safeguard our dem-

ocratic election process."

FFRF sued in November 2012 based on the agency's reported moratorium on enforcing the electioneering restrictions against churches and religious organizations. No 501(c)(3) entity, including churches, may retain tax exemption if it endorses political candidates.

Yet the IRS had no procedure in place to initiate churches examinations, after a Minnesota district court invalidated the IRS' prior procedure in 2009. Church groups began to openly engage in politicking at annual organized events such as "Pulpit Freedom Sunday." An IRS official publicly reported in 2012 that the IRS had an ongoing moratorium on making church tax examinations.

On June 16, a year and a half after filing suit, FFRF received its first information from the IRS indicating it no longer has a policy of non-enforcement against churches. FFRF's counsel, Richard L. Bolton, also discussed the policy with the Department of Justice, and on June 27, FFRF was apprised that the IRS has a procedure in place for "signature authority" to initiate church tax investigations or examinations.

Complicating the practical effect for now of the settlement is the global moratorium currently in place on IRS investigations of any tax-exempt entities, church or otherwise, while Congress conducts its probe on IRS tea party policies.

The intervening church filed a motion insisting: "FFRF should not be in a position to drop this lawsuit and file an identical lawsuit (and again put the Church's interests in jeopardy) a week, a month, or a year in the future." The

FFRF to distribute more atheist lit in Fla. district

Judge Kendall Sharp of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida dismissed FFRF's free speech case against the Orange County School District as moot, since the district has agreed to let FFRF distribute all of the literature it had previously prohibited.

In 2013, FFRF and its local chapter, the Central Florida Freethought Community, sought to distribute literature in several public high schools after the district allowed an evangelical Christian group to distribute bibles.

"This is a victory. The court has acknowledged that the school district is allowing all the materials that were initially prohibited," said FFRF Co-President Dan Barker. "We disagree with how the court and the school district chose to handle this clear-cut discrimination, so we're planning to appeal on some issues, but overall, it's a win."

The now-permitted materials include a pamphlet that the district had previously prohibited, claiming it "argues that Jesus did not promote equality and social justice, was not compassionate, was not reliable and was not a good example."

Other FFRF "nontracts" that discuss what the bible says about abortion and which, according to the district, "assert that God is hateful, arrogant, sexist and cruel," will now be allowed. As will Robert Price's *Jesus Is Dead*, which the district banned earlier because "[t]he claim that Je-

sus was not crucified or resurrected is age-inappropriate for the maturity levels of many of the students in high school." (An odd claim given that the district allowed the violence-filled bible.)

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, who worked closely on the case with litigating attorney Steven Brady, noted that the forum is now open to all comers. "Satanists can distribute their literature, Muslims can distribute the Quran and atheists can distribute books that criticize religion."

CFFC Leader David Williamson added, "We intend to give out a lot more literature to educate students about atheism and the importance of keeping religion out of public schools. We are even designing new materials specifically for students and families in Orange County."

From the beginning, FFRF and CFFC have maintained that Orange County should close the distribution forum. "The irony is that kids can get a bible anywhere. It's the country's most widely available book," Seidel said. "But where could a Christian kid get a copy of Sam Harris's *Letter to a Christian Nation* so easily? As long as the forum remains open, they can get one in Orange County Public Schools."

FFRF thanks David Williamson for being a plaintiff and for his hard work. Other plaintiffs were FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor, whose writings were among those that were censored.

Becket Fund has asked the federal court to dismiss the suit "with prejudice," so that FFRF could not renew its challenge if the IRS reverts to taking no action on violative churches.

On July 29, FFRF filed a response making it clear it will only dismiss if "our agreement has teeth," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, "to ensure that we can resume the suit if anti-electioneering provisions are not enforced in the future against

rogue political churches."

Alliance Defending Freedom, which has proclaimed Oct. 5 as Pulpit Freedom Sunday this year, filed a Freedom of Information Act request after learning of the July 17 agreement, insinuating that the IRS was withholding information.

Contrary to the intervenor's contention, "there is nothing strange, collusive, or concealed here," noted the IRS in a July 22 motion filed with the court.

Watchdog trio challenges Michigan mayor's veto of atheist display

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Freedom of Religion and Belief. "Nobody should be excluded from their own city hall based on what they believe, or don't believe."

In addition to Korobkin, Luchenitser and Mach, Marshall is represented by Ayesha Khan of Americans United,

Rebecca Markert and Patrick Elliott of FFRF and Michael Steinberg, Kary Moss and William Wertheimer of the ACLU of Michigan.

To read the legal complaint and motion for preliminary injunction: ffrf.org/legal/challenges/ongoing-lawsuits/

Include FFRF In Your Estate Planning

Arrange a bequest in your will or trust, or make the Freedom From Religion Foundation the beneficiary of an insurance policy, bank account, or IRA. It's easy to do.

For related information (or to request a bequest brochure), please phone Annie Laurie Gaylor at (608) 256-8900.

FFRF
P.O. Box 750
Madison WI 53701

Freedom Depends on Freethinkers



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • ffrf.org

What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

Founded in 1978 as a national organization of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., works to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists.

The Foundation's e-mail address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all e-mail correspondence.

Foundation members wishing to receive online news releases, "action alerts" and "Freethought of the Day" should contact info@ffrf.org.

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

Trimeter-Tercet

Pseudo-Sonnet

(For Margie on our 64th anniversary, Aug. 19)

Our love, just a spark at the start,
Ignited a fire in our hearts,
And we knew that we never would part.

We were tinder for that sudden blaze.
We could tell it was something that stays:
I could see it all there in your gaze.

We knew we would have to be tough,
For this is a world that plays rough,
And we'd not win the prize with a bluff.

So now after years of devotion
We're swimming in tides of emotion,
Our passion as deep as the ocean.

The love that began as a fire
Now floats in a sea of desire.

© Philip Appleman.
Freethought Today is honored to publish this new poem



Philip Appleman is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include *Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible* (2012), *Darwin's Ark* (new 2009 edition) and *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie* (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used *Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, and the *Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population*.

His poetry and fiction have won many awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Yale Review*.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both "Afterlife" Members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Phil's books: ffrf.org/shop.



Overheard

In 2010, [Judge] Crabb declared the National Day of Prayer unconstitutional, provoking national outrage. The decision was overturned by a federal appeals court. Asked in a joking way what her thinking was in issuing that ruling, Crabb laughed softly and said, "I was thinking that the government shouldn't be in the business of sponsoring, promoting religion. Obviously, people disagreed." **Profile of U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb, who ruled in favor of FFRF in its National Day of Prayer lawsuit** *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 7-22-14



Based on the evidence, this crime did not occur as reported. **Dayton, Ohio, Police Chief Richard Biehl, on a bus driver's story that his chest pocket bible miraculously stopped two bullets, when in reality he fired the shot himself with the book on the sidewalk** *WDTM*, 6-18-14

We have been starting our meetings with a nonsectarian prayer since 2013. The Greece, N.Y., case is prompting us to change the method. **Alex Saitta, chairman of the School Board of Pickens County, S.C., on switching to "Jesus prayers"** *Christian Post*, 6-27-14

The Supreme Court ruled today that some bosses can now withhold contraceptive care from their employees' health coverage based on their own religious views that their employees may not even share. President Obama believes that women should make personal health care decisions for themselves rather than their bosses deciding for them. **White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, on Obama's reaction to the Hobby Lobby decision** *whitehouse.gov*, 6-30-14

This is the heart of theocratic ideology: It is a fascism with a religious face. Although Christians and Muslims have had numerous conflicts over the centuries that cost countless lives, the similarities between their two doctrines when carried to extremes are downright eerie. **Randy Renau, Corryton, Tenn., letter to the editor, "Culture should not be based on Bible"** *Knoxville News*, 7-1-14

This is a simple case of equal time. The Supreme Court says that invocations are constitutional if the policy doesn't discriminate along sectarian bounds. That includes invocations by representatives of atheism, humanism, Wicca or any other religious tradition. **Randy Word, president of Metroplex Atheists, on applying to give the opening City Council invocation in Rowlett, Texas** *Lakeshore Times*, 7-1-14

When Gallup measured Bible reading in the 1980s, three in four Americans claimed to read Scripture at least on occasion. Two decades later, that number had fallen by 20%. That's like losing 700 Bible readers every day. **Ruth Kramer, article, "Decline in Bible literacy"** *Mission Network News*, 7-2-14

Atheism Rules/Wins (With Facts) **Message chalked on the sidewalk at John Knox Presbyterian Church, Keizer, Ore.** *Salem Statesman Journal*, 6-6-14

Muslims in the United Arab Emirates are among the most common sufferers of degenerative knee problems in the world because of soaring obesity rates and a kneeling-to-pray culture. **News story** *Abu Dhabi National*, 6-7-14

Wearing pink or blue shoes, [the soccer players] might as well wear women's panties or a bra. **Russian Orthodox priest Alexander Shumsky, calling the World Cup a "homosexual abomination"** *Moscow Times*, 6-7-14

In the Hobby Lobby [and Conestoga Wood] cases, five male justices of the Supreme Court, who are all members of the Catholic faith and who each were appointed by a president who hailed from the Republican Party, decided that a huge corporation, with thousands of employees and gargantuan revenues, was a "person" entitled to assert a religious objection to the Affordable Care Act's contraception mandate because that corporation was "closely held" by family members. To the average person, the result looks stupid and smells worse. **Judge Richard G. Kopf, U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska, an appointee of President George H.W. Bush** *herculesandtheumpire.com*, 7-5-14

YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO

FREETHOUGHT

RADIO

produced by the
Freedom From Religion
Foundation



Hosted by Dan Barker and
Annie Laurie Gaylor

Broadcasts and streams Saturdays at 11 a.m. Central, Progressive Talk The Mic 92.1 FM, Madison, Wis., and over several other stations.
iTunes or podcasts archived at: ffrf.org/news/radio

Slightly irreverent views,
news, music & interviews



FFRF protests Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby ruling

June 30 marked a turning point in the struggle to uphold the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, according to FFRF's statement released on the day the Supreme Court issued its chilling abuse of "religious liberty."

In a 5-4 split, the court held that for-profit corporations can exercise their so-called religious conscience in order to restrict employees' access to contraceptives. The ruling in *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores* held that the contraceptive coverage granted by the Affordable Care Act creates a "significant burden" on a corporation's free exercise of religion.

Once again an all-Catholic, all-male, all-ultra-conservative majority of five has voted to eviscerate fundamental rights. The law's requirement that employers who provide health care coverage must offer preventive care, including prescriptive contraceptives, does not violate the rights of Hobby Lobby, even though it is run by a fundamentalist zealot. But the court's ruling giving corporate veto power over women workers' private contraceptive choices, certainly violates the rights of women.

It was all over by page 2 of the Supreme Court's decision favoring the fundamentalist Christian owner of Hobby Lobby Stores and the Mennonite owner of Conestoga Wood Specialties. Justice Samuel Alito, joined by his Catholic brethren, wrote these jaw-dropping words:

"[W]e must decide whether the challenged HHS regulations substantially burden the exercise of religion, and we hold that they do. The owners of the businesses have religious objections to abortion, and according to their religious beliefs the four contraceptive methods at issue are abortifacients. If the owners comply with the HHS mandate, they believe they will be facilitating abortions."

The fanatical businessmen who brought the litigation believe some forms of the birth control pill and IUD are abortifacients, despite reality. The amicus brief of the College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and 21 other medical professional groups thoroughly debunking this misrepresentation.

The ruling was not based on the Constitution, but on the Religious

Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), a statute. This statute was adopted by Congress and must be repealed by Congress. Even Alito admits: "As we have seen, RFRA was designed to provide very broad protection for religious liberty. By enacting RFRA, Congress went far beyond what this Court has held is constitutionally required."

The Freedom From Religion Foundation's amicus brief noted state-church attorney Marci A. Hamilton (joined by groups advocating for the rights of victims of religious abuse), was the only brief before the Supreme Court that argued that RFRA is unconstitutional. FFRF's important brief points out that RFRA "accords religious believers extreme religious liberty rights that yield a political and fiscal windfall in violation of the clearest commands of the Establishment Clause."

During oral arguments, counsel for the government, Solicitor General Donald Verrilli, noted that a decision in favor of Hobby Lobby would be "the first time under the Free Exercise Clause or under RFRA in which [the Supreme Court] or any court has held that an employer . . . may be granted an exemption that extinguishes statutorily guaranteed benefits of fundamental importance."

The ruling ignored the rights and needs of thousands of female Hobby Lobby employees, and millions of women nationwide who work at for-profit corporations. Women workers must not be at the mercy of employers who happen to be religious fanatics who want to intrude into private reproductive decisions that are none of their business. Rather than protecting women workers' right to health care and women's freedom of conscience, the Court has turned its back on them in the name of "religious liberty."

This damaging decision opens the floodgates for corporations, interested only in increasing their bottom line, to claim religious objections to a variety of generally applicable laws. The Court arbitrarily claims its decision would not necessarily allow a corporation to claim a similar religious objection to blood transfusions, vaccines, or mental health services, or create a religious right to discriminate on the basis



More than 200 people protested the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision at its store in Monona, Wis., including Katie Daniel, FFRF bookkeeper. The rally was coordinated by FFRF and the National Organization for Women – Wis. chapter..



Dayna Long, Wisconsin NOW president and FFRF administrative assistant, talked with Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne.



Reproductive rights rally

Ron Herman, past president of FFRF-Albuquerque, writes about the July rally at Hobby Lobby to protest the Supreme Court decision: "There were about 60 people there at one point. About 15 were supporting the court's decision. There were some heated words between the two sides, mostly on the abortion rights issue. City police were present on bicycles, just in case. A couple I talked to who supported Hobby Lobby were very poorly informed."

of sex, sexual orientation or race. But very obviously, the ruling creates mischievous precedent that will haunt the next generation of litigation.

The high court has ruled that contraception — the right to plan families and avert unwanted pregnancies — is not necessary for women's health. One in four U.S. women died due to pregnancy or childbirth in the 19th century. It is a lie for the Supreme Court to aver that birth control is not preventive medicine. The court is practicing reckless medicine without a license.

We cannot let a male, Catholic, ultra-conservative majority on the court turn the clock back a century. Join

FFRF in working now for the most practical remedy for this pernicious decision — the repeal by Congress of RFRA. None of our civil and human rights, established after decades and decades of struggle and education, will be safe from the reach of religious bigots until RFRA is overturned.

This statement was written by FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, Staff Attorneys Andrew Seidel and Sam Grover. Turn to page 12 to read FFRF's ad against the Hobby Lobby ruling that ran in The New York Times on July 3.

FFRF awards many spring student activists



Josh dressed up for a school dance.

Cliff Richards Memorial Award *Student stands up for right to sit*

FFRF has awarded Josh a \$1,000 Cliff Richards Memorial Student Activist Award. He was FFRF's complainant in Orange County, Fla.

By Joshua Flashman

My name is Joshua Flashman and I am 14 years old. This past year while in the eighth grade at Southwest Middle School in Orlando, Fla., I fought for the right of our students to sit during the Pledge of Allegiance. Our school had a policy of forcing students to stand and recite the pledge, regardless of a person's beliefs. When I tried explaining that I believed I was allowed to sit quietly during the pledge, I got in trouble with the deans. I worked with FFRF to get this to be allowed. The school now allows students to sit quietly during the pledge and has

posted a notice saying so. Even after we were finally allowed to sit during the pledge, I still faced many repercussions from the deans and principal. They were not happy that I made them change. But it was worth it because I knew I was helping other students who would have been too scared to stand up for their rights and beliefs. Next year at my new high school, I am creating a Secular Student Alliance club with a dedication and determination to advance secular rights. I expect to run into some trouble and bullying, but I feel this is important and will continue to press on. My main interests are in computers, and I am also joining the high school ROTC program in High School. I hope to go to college (MIT would be my choice) to study computer programming so I can join the military as an information warfare officer.



Declare and share *your* nonbelief in FFRF's online "Out of the Closet" campaign! ffrf.org/out

North Carolina siblings win FFRF student activist awards



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor introduced Kalei and Ben Wilson at the Freedom From Religion in the Bible Belt conference in Raleigh, N.C., on May 2:

Kalei is one of our younger student activist awardees, but we've actually had honorees as young as 11. Kalei is 15. She and her brother Ben were thwarted in trying to start a freethought club at their high school in a smaller town in North Carolina. Kalei is receiving the memorial that I started in honor of my father, who was the principal volunteer for the Freedom From Religion Foundation. He died three years ago. It's called the Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Award of \$1,000. He would have been very touched by her plight.

Ben, who started this challenge at the school, is 17. He's going to say a few words. He tried to start a secular club during the fall semester, then he moved on to community school. He is the debut recipient of the Cliff Richards Memorial Student Activist Award of \$1,000. You're going to be hearing about this award because one of our members who got ill very abruptly with stage 4 cancer called me up and said he wanted a bequest to go to the perpetuation of our student activist awards.

We have received a \$140,000 in his name this spring for these awards. He was very excited about the activism of younger people and freethinkers. He was from Wisconsin, ended up in Washington state, where he made use of the death with dignity law. He would have been very, very impressed with Ben Wilson.

By Ben Wilson

Wow! Well, it started out at my first year at the school, a big bible belt school, bunch of country people,

Christians. We wanted to start a club because I knew a couple people who weren't "out" atheists but were not religious. So I started talking the club up, talked to the Secular Student Alliance, got all the paperwork completed and went into the principal. She actually told me "no" — at first. She said it was because they didn't want an atheist group in the schools. I came back to her with the law that said if she had Christian groups, she's going to let me have a secular group.

She then postponed our meeting for two weeks, I guess hoping I'd forget about it. Postponed it for two weeks — not even researching about what the club was about, which she promised she would do.

I came in again and was like, "Hey, I need to get moving on this." She goes, "Oh, I haven't even looked it up." I was like, "Well, let's do that now." And so we looked it up. She reads the definition of atheist from Wikipedia, I think, and goes, "I think this a satanist group."

I was — completely confused! "I think you've got the wrong definition of atheism. Theists are known as believers, and atheists are nonbelievers."

So we went on about that. She ended up saying stuff like, "It's like if you're gay, you go to Asheville and not stay here." So confused.

Then we took it to the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They helped us out a lot, but then I ended up getting out of school, going to Haywood Community College, and then Kalei took over. She ended up getting the harsh end of the deal because a lot of kids turned on us. Friends just said we're not going to be your friends anymore. People destroyed her projects at schools with bibles.

But, thank y'all. I love being up here, I love you y'all. This is awesome. It's nice to have a community now. Better than Christians.



Max Nielson, Allen P. Wilkinson Student Activist awardee

‘One of the most profoundly impactful moments of my life.’

Max Nielson spoke May 3 at the Freedom From Religion in the Bible Belt conference sponsored by FFRF in conjunction with its chapter, the Triangle Freethought Society, in Raleigh, N.C. Max had previously received a student activist award at FFRF’s 2012 annual convention in Portland, Ore.

That year he became lead plaintiff in FFRF’s federal lawsuit to stop graduation prayers in his school district. The issue is largely resolved, but FFRF, Max and two other plaintiffs (Dakota McMillan and Jacob Zupon) are still challenging prayer by their school board.

Max received a second honor in Raleigh, the Allen P. Wilkinson Student Activist Award of \$1,000, generously endowed by FFRF member Allen P. Wilkinson. He asked that it go to the student who “best exemplifies qualities of FFRF and dares to speak up and engage in enlightening high school students and others in the community.”

By Max Nielson

I was raised secular with the Unitarian Universalist Church in Columbia, S.C. So when I was confronted with the issue of school prayer at my high school, I didn’t really know what to do at first. I didn’t know that I could do anything until I found out that a similar issue had already been settled with help from FFRF in my state through the complaint of Harrison Hopkins.

District 5, where I lived, had a policy on the books that a majority of graduating seniors would vote on whether or not to have a prayer at graduation. It is kind of ridiculous. Rights are not to be voted on. And every part of that graduation prayer ceremony process was facilitated by school officials. It was a clear violation of church and state across the board.

Since I last spoke at the FFRF convention about my case, I’ve gone on to found the Secular Student Alliance at the College of Charleston and interned in D.C. with the Secular Coalition for America. I began work as their social media specialist, in which I have helped launch Openly Secular, which has been a lot of fun. This year I continued to lead the Secular Student Alliance in Charleston. This summer I am interning with the Center for Inquiry in Buffalo, N.Y.

The opportunity FFRF has given me to become involved with this move-

ment I never even knew existed has probably been one of the most profoundly impactful moments of my life. I am very grateful for the opportunity. But my co-plaintiff, Dakota, is still in high school. Dakota and my other co-plaintiff, Jacob, having just graduated, didn’t have all of those opportunities.

Something that stands out since I last spoke was that Dakota was handed a note by one of her friends, who said — I can quote directly from it — he was discussing the issue of the lawsuit with his mother. He was basically given the ultimatum of agreeing that there should be a graduation prayer or not living in the household. It was that stark.

The way Dakota got this note was that she was wondering why this friend suddenly had stopped talking to her. It is horrifying. It is a scary thing to have happen to her.

I went through my deposition with the attorneys. The first half of it was very intense. They were asking all sorts of questions about my history with the Boy Scouts of America or any time I would have encountered public prayer of any sort.

It relaxed after Aaron, my fantastic lawyer, cut in and informed them I am only suing for nominal damages. Even the lawyers on the other side understand that the school prayer issue is pretty much settled.

Since then, as mentioned, the case has grown to encompass the school board prayers, and at those events they oftentimes have pastors come in from neighboring churches. And there are events at the school board meetings where students are invited and actively attend. I think on that issue we will see some change.

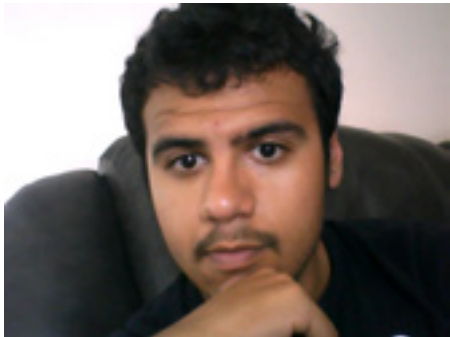
As Annie Laurie mentioned, they have changed the school policy from voting on graduation prayer to directly parroting the South Carolina Student-led Messages Act. Which I am OK with. It basically says the school can appoint a student speaker, and then they are done. That is it. They do not have any influence on what that speaker says. If that speaker wants to pray, that is within the purview of their free speech. I am much more comfortable with that than a specifically sponsored graduation prayer event.

I am happy to see how far this has come, and I am very grateful for this award and the opportunities FFRF has given me. Thank you.

Thomas Jefferson Student Activists

Jacob Zupon and Dakota McMillan (with Max Nielson, center) received FFRF Thomas Jefferson Student Activist Awards of \$2,000 this spring for serving, with Max, as the all-essential plaintiffs in an FFRF lawsuit. The ongoing federal lawsuit challenges graduation prayers and school board prayers in their South Carolina school district. The \$1,000 awards were endowed by Len and Karen Eisenberg, FFRF members, with additional funding via the Cliff Richards Memorial Student Activist Award, recognizing Jacob and Dakota’s special contributions. The students enabled the lawsuit to go forward after Max graduated.

FFRF sponsors humanist scholarship for South L.A. atheist student



FFRF is pleased to announce that it has awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Kelvin Manjarrez, a graduate from Gardena High School, Calif., who will be attending El Camino College in conjunction with Black Skeptics Los Angeles’ 2014 First in the Family Humanist Scholarships.

Kelvin has been a volunteer for Reading Partners Los Angeles and a translator in the 2014 primary election. He identifies as an atheist and aspires to be an English professor. “I have always been passionate about our educational system. A wise man once said that: ‘Humanity’s greatest fear is the unknown,’ “ Kelvin wrote in his essay. “This accounts for contrived religions of all sorts, a simple explanation to the unexplained.

“Citizens who are better educated can better distinguish between right and wrong. This, in turn, generates understanding and unity amongst different groups of people who would have otherwise segregated, fought and killed one another. It is of no coincidence that some of the brightest minds in history have been social activists as well as advocates for a better pedagogical system: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Albert Einstein, Stephen

Hawking and Neil deGrasse Tyson, just to name a few.”

The BSLA scholarships focus on outstanding South Los Angeles students who are undocumented, in foster care, homeless, LGBT or atheist youth. BSLA is the first atheist organization to specifically address college pipelining for youth of color.

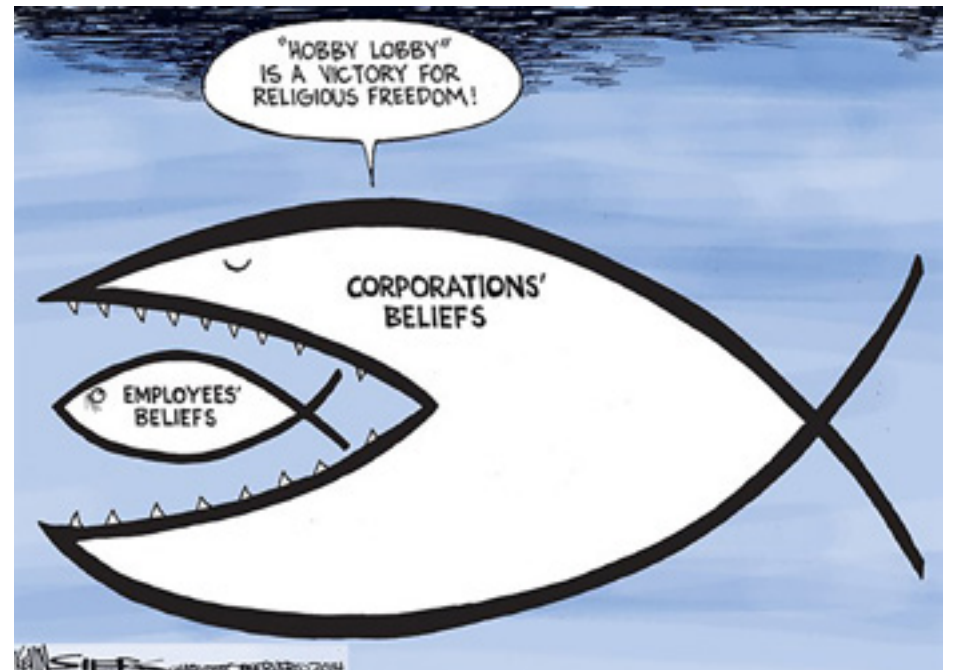
“If current prison pipelining trends persist the Education Trust estimates that only one of every 20 African American kindergartners will graduate from a four-year California university in the next decade,” noted BSLA activist Sikiyu Hutchinson.

“We’re delighted to be partnering with BSLA on such a worthwhile and needed endeavor, and are impressed with Kelvin’s essay and aspirations,” said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

FFRF first launched a student scholarship essay competition shortly after it began as a national group in 1978. FFRF now offers three contests: one for college-bound high school seniors, one for ongoing college students and a third for graduate students and/or students age 25-30. Last year FFRF awarded over \$34,000 in essay scholarships to a diverse range of students.

FFRF also offers student and youth activist awards, several endowed by generous individual FFRF members. This year so far, FFRF has already awarded \$7,000 to secular student activists.

BSLA’s other scholars this year are: Jamion Allen, Hugo Cervantes, Elizabeth Hernandez and Tiare Hilland. They received \$500-1,000 scholarships toward their college expenses.



FFRF'er Bobby 'Sugar' Hinds living the sweet life

The following feature story on Bobby "Sugar" Hinds, FFRF Lifetime Member, was published May 3, 2014, and is reprinted with permission of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, which holds the copyright.

By Gary D'Amato
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

MADISON — Bobby Hinds doesn't want to brag about the things he's done, the people he's met and the places he's been, so he sums it all up with, "I've been very lucky."

Lucky? The son of an alcoholic father and a mother stricken with polio who swiped bottles of milk and bananas so his destitute family could eat during the Great Depression — and went on to build a multimillion-dollar business? Lucky? The kid who was sentenced, 17 days shy of his 10th birthday, to the Waukesha Industrial School for Boys for his part in a string of robberies —

and went on to rub elbows with famous athletes and A-list celebrities?

Lucky? The young man who started making jump ropes in his backyard on Regent Street — and wound up sitting on Johnny Carson's couch?

No, lucky doesn't quite cut it, unless you consider Hinds' knack for being in the right place at the right time merely a string of cosmic coincidences. Then again, he could have been napping during that layover at O'Hare in 1976 instead of jumping rope in the concourse when Charles Kuralt walked through.

That's how Hinds wound up featured in a segment of CBS' "On the Road with Charles Kuralt."

A closer examination of Hinds' life reveals that luck played a very small role in his many successes. He got where he is through determination, charisma, hard work and a talent for self-promotion.

In other words, he was plucky, not lucky.

On Sunday, the 82-year-old Hinds

will be inducted into the National Fitness Hall of Fame in Glendale Heights, Ill. He'll join fitness athletes and pioneers such as Charles Atlas, Jack LaLanne, Joe Weider, Vic Tanny, Joseph Pilates and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

They all have great stories.

None can top the story of Bobby Hinds.

Hinds was born in Kenosha on Sept. 22, 1931. He did not have an all-American childhood, and by age 9, he was running with older boys, robbing people on the street and burglarizing homes.

Caught and sentenced to reform school, and being the youngest and smallest kid in the place, he had to learn how to use his fists in order to avoid a perpetually bloody nose.

"In that environment," Hinds says, "you had to learn how to defend yourself."

Boxing wasn't so much a "sweet science" to Hinds as it was his ticket out of a life of crime. At 13, he became the nation's youngest Golden Gloves champion and caught the eye of John Walsh, legendary coach of the powerhouse University of Wisconsin boxing teams.

"I never would have gone to college otherwise," says Hinds, who accepted Walsh's scholarship offer and attended UW with childhood pal Alan Ameche, his backfield mate at Kenosha High School.

While Ameche won fame on the gridiron and capped his college career with the 1954 Heisman Trophy, Hinds went 38-0 in dual meets as an undersized heavyweight.

After college, Hinds taught art classes at Madison East High School and moonlighted as a professional boxer. Offered \$1,500 to fight on the undercard of a Sugar Ray Robinson-Gene Fullmer title bout at Chicago Stadium, he called in sick on the day of the fight and drove to Chicago.

But Hinds was scheduled to fight after the main attraction, and when Robinson knocked out Fullmer in the fifth round, Hinds' fight was shown live on TV to fill the allotted time. He won by TKO over Gene White but was fired the next day by his principal, who happened to be watching the fights.

A broken wrist ended Hinds' boxing career, so he became an insurance salesman. To stand out, he sported a beard and wore a jumpsuit to work. He sold \$1 million worth of policies in his first six months. He was glib and charismatic, and the selling part was easy for him. But as good as he was at it, Hinds was restless and creative and eventually discovered his true calling: perfecting the jump rope.

In those days, jump ropes were made of leather or rope and came in standard lengths. By stringing plastic beads over a rubber tube, Hinds created a jump rope that was durable, balanced, weighted and adjustable.

Did the world need a better jump rope? With anyone other than Hinds as pitchman, probably not.

He made an appointment to show the "Bobby Hinds' Lifeline" to J.C. Penney executives and flew to New York. It did not go well.

"All I had was a jump rope in a poly bag with a header," Hinds says. "I didn't have a clue. I didn't even have a business card. The guy says, 'What do you got?' I said, 'I've got a jump rope.' He said, 'We already sell those.'"

Hinds went through his pitch, explaining why his jump rope was superior to the ones J.C. Penney sold. The buyer was not impressed.

"He said, 'Son, come back when you're famous,'" Hinds says with a laugh.

Now he had a problem. He didn't have enough money to fly home, so he walked to Central Park, opened a box full of Lifelines and started jumping rope.

Meet a Muscular Member



Photo: Annie Laurie Gaylor

Bobby "Sugar" Hinds literally bought Bruce "The Boss" Springsteen's black leather jacket off his back.

Name: Bobby "Sugar" Hinds.
Where I live: Downtown Madison, Wis.
Where and when I was born: Kenosha, Wis., Sept. 22, 1931.
Family: Two sons and two daughters and my wife of 59 years.
Education: B.S. in criminology and art.
Occupation: Designer of fitness equipment.
How I got where I am today: Dumb luck.
Where I'm headed: I'll tell you when I get there.
Person in history I admire and why: Clarence Darrow because of his passion for truth.

A quotation I like: "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." — Aristotle

These are a few of my favorite things: Creating fitness equipment, reading biographies, exercising.

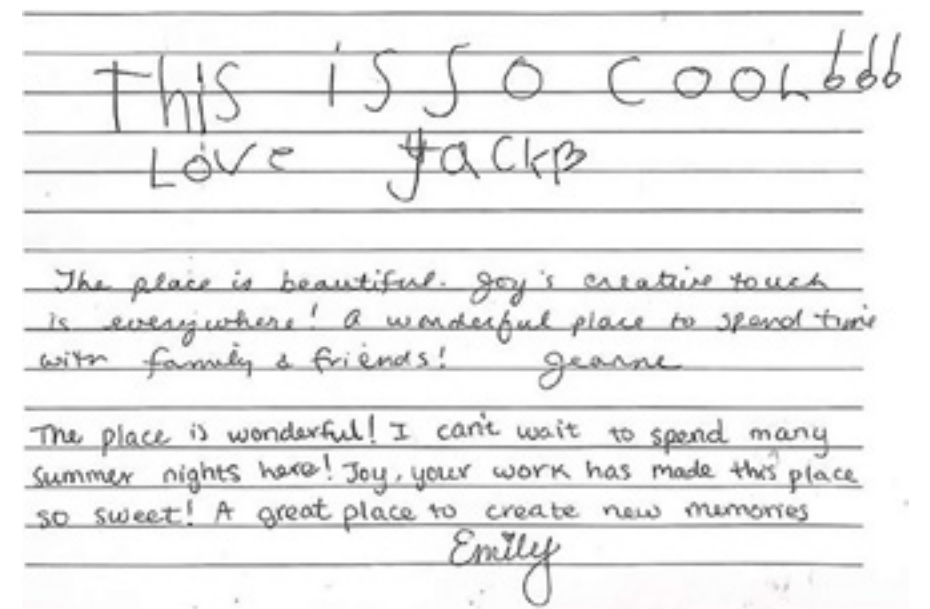
These are not: Insincerity.

My doubts about religion started: About age 13 when I began reading biographies of Clarence Darrow, Thomas Dewey and Gore Vidal.

Before I die: I'd like to see a secular humanist president.

Ways I promote freethought: By supporting secular causes financially, etc. [Bobby joined FFRF in 1984.]

Hinds finds business bliss at Sugarland



Testimonials from Sugarland visitors.

While Bobby "Sugar" Hinds has moved to the sidelines with the sale of LifelineUSA, he still serves on the board of Kiio Inc., a Lifeline physical therapy spinoff formerly called Kayo Technology. He's also gotten into the wedding business with Sugarland, along with his wife Joy and Nancy and Dan Viste. The Vistes also operate another restored 19th century building, the Old Feed Mill restaurant, where meals and receptions are available.

Bobby bought the 70-acre farm between Mazomanie and Arena, Wis., in 2003 and with the Vistes has turned it into a wedding venue. "We're booked up three years in advance," he says.

The guest house with sleeping rooms is a fully restored 1850s Colonial Revival farmhouse. A large, decayed fountain was also rebuilt along with a 126-foot-long dairy barn that's a celebration of the carpenter's art. A majestic oak tree graces the grounds.



Bobby Hinds strikes a pose at the Wisconsin Capitol.

Soon a crowd gathered around to watch — Hinds once turned 63 revolutions in 10 seconds, which was acknowledged as the world record — and he sold a few jump ropes.

Hinds also challenged the members of his “audience” to a two-minute jump-off: Anybody who could beat him would get a free Lifeline.

A woman took him up on the challenge, and Hinds saw that she could handle a jump rope. He let her beat him and gave her a Lifeline.

Just like that, he had an idea.

“How would you like to be on TV?” he asked her.

Hinds ran to a pay phone and cold-called Todman & Associates, which produced television game shows. He talked his way into the office and right onto “To Tell the Truth” with his new best friend, the woman he’d just met in Central Park.

They demonstrated the Lifeline and host Garry Moore, suitably impressed, asked Hinds where viewers could buy the jump rope.

Thinking on his feet, Hinds answered, of course, “J.C. Penney.”

The show was taped and when it aired a few weeks later, managers of dozens of J.C. Penney stores around the nation started calling the corpo-

rate office to ask about the jump rope promotion.

“We did an opening order for 85,000 jump ropes,” Hinds says.

He couldn’t keep up with the demand. He employed the physically and mentally disabled and set up shop in his backyard.

At one point, his crew was assembling 7,000 Lifelines a day and he was making \$1 per jump rope. You do the math.

Hinds appeared on “The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson” [McLean Stevenson was guest hosting], “The Merv Griffin Show” and “The Mike Douglas Show.” He was on the forefront of the ’70s fitness revolution. Time magazine dubbed him “The Jump Rope King.”

Lifeline — some plastic beads over a rubber tube — made him a millionaire.

Since 1973, Madison-based LifelineUSA has developed dozens of other portable fitness and training products, many of them based on resistance training with lightweight tubing.

“You don’t need weights,” says Hinds, who holds many patents. “Weights are really kind of passé. We live in a mobile society. That was the whole idea.”



“God is *not* great,” the late Christopher Hitchens autographed this photo at FFRF’s 2007 national convention in Madison.

• • •

Hinds, who is 82 going on 22, works out for an hour every day and still can do 20 perfect chin-ups. He carries 190 pounds on his 6-foot-1 frame, and when he makes a muscle, his biceps bulges impressively.

But age catches up with everyone, doesn’t it?

Hinds considers the question for several seconds.

“I don’t know,” he says.

Last September he sold LifelineUSA to Chicago-based Pivotal 5, which specializes in hand-held fitness products.

But Hinds remains on staff as a product designer and developer and is excited about several new ideas he’s working on.

“I can’t keep up with him,” says 29-year-old Mike Vig, the brand director for Lifeline. “He’s been an inspiration to everybody in our company.”

Vig says Pivotal 5’s employees, many of whom have known Hinds for years, are excited about his induction into the Fitness Hall of Fame.

“It’s a pretty big deal for everybody in our company,” he says.

Hinds gives a visitor a tour of his office, its walls lined with dozens of photos of movie stars and celebrities who have used his products and become his friends.

He’s dined with Liam Neeson in New York and worked out with Bernard Hopkins in Philadelphia. He mailed a Lifeline Portable Gym to imprisoned mobster John Gotti; the gym was returned — Gotti explained that it wasn’t allowed in prison — but the two became pen pals. Hinds made in-

fomercials with Tony Dorsett, Johnny Unitas and Herb Brooks. His likeness appeared on 10 million boxes of Wheaties.

Billy Joel uses Lifeline’s Portable Gym. So do Bruce Springsteen, Woody Harrelson, Sylvester Stallone, Tina Turner, Lionel Richie and Tom Jones.

Hinds has a pair of baseball cleats given to him by the late Bobby Thomson, who wrote on a photo of the Polo Grounds, “You might be the world jump rope champion but after hitting this one I think I could have out-jumped you.”

That would be, of course, the Shot Heard ’Round the World.

On another wall, Hinds has on display the ax and crampons used by Jim Whittaker when the mountaineer became the first American to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Whittaker also sent a letter, saying he couldn’t have done it without Hinds’ help.

Next to the Whittaker display is a framed napkin on which LeRoy Neiman doodled while he and Hinds ate lunch. Nearby is a letter written by Neiman to Hugh Hefner: “Hef, if I can use this Lifeline gym, you sure as hell can. Love, LeRoy.”

Hinds gets in a boxer’s crouch and throws a punch at his visitor’s midsection, pulling his hand back at the last millisecond. He laughs as the visitor doubles over, anticipating pain that doesn’t come.

“I couldn’t have written this script,” he says of his life.

If you didn’t know any better, you’d say he’s the luckiest man alive.



Bobby Hinds “spars” with singer Billy Joel, who advises him to watch his right hand.



Bobby Hinds and actor Mickey Rooney, who died last April.

State/Church Bulletin

Satanist suit based on Hobby Lobby

The New York-based Satanic Temple announced July 28 a campaign against “informed consent” laws that require providers to furnish women certain information when they seek an abortion. Citing the Supreme Court’s Hobby Lobby decision, the group argues that women can claim a religious exemption from the informational requirements.

A press release said the court “has decided that religious beliefs are so sacrosanct that they can even trump scientific fact. This was made clear when they allowed Hobby Lobby to claim certain contraceptives were abortifacients, when in fact they are not. Because of the respect the Court has given to religious beliefs, and the fact that our beliefs are based on best available knowledge, we expect that our belief in the illegitimacy of state mandated ‘informational’ material is enough to exempt us, and those who hold our beliefs, from having to receive them.”

The temple’s website says it holds “the basic premise that undue suffering is bad, and that which reduces suffering is good. We do not believe in symbolic ‘evil.’ We embrace blasphemy as a legitimate expression of personal independence from counterproductive traditional norms.”

♦ ♦ ♦

In *Hasan v. Obama* and *Rabbani v. Obama*, filed July 3 in D.C.’s federal district court, the British advocacy group Reprieve argued that the previous decision in *Rasul v. Myers* holding that Guantanamo Bay detainees are not persons protected by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act has effectively been overruled by the Supreme Court’s decision in the Hobby Lobby case:

“The Guantanamo Bay detainees, as flesh-and-blood human beings, are surely ‘individuals,’ and thus they are no less ‘person[s]’ than are the for-profit corporations in Hobby Lobby or the resident noncitizens whom Hobby Lobby gives as an example of persons to whom the RFRA must apply.”

Reprieve earlier filed emergency motions on behalf of two prisoners seeking the right to participate in communal prayer during Ramadan.

♦ ♦ ♦

A Reuters/Ipsos poll of 10,693 people conducted April 28 to June 20 showed that most respondents oppose letting employers, based on their religious views, exclude certain contraceptives from workers’ insurance coverage.

Results showed 53% disagreed that employers should be able to limit coverage, while 35% agreed and 12% were unsure.

Suit settled over denial of bus ads

A federal lawsuit by the Washington, D.C.-based United Coalition of Reason against the Port Authority of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh was settled July 2, with the agency agreeing to pay UnitedCoR \$20,000 in damages and the Appignani Humanist Legal Center of the American Humanist Association \$40,000 in expenses. FFRF is a coalition ally.

The suit was filed in November 2013 after the Port Authority refused to run \$5,700 worth of bus ads which would

have read “Don’t believe in God? You are not alone.”

Fred Edwards, national director of UnitedCoR, said, “We also still maintain that the Port Authority didn’t correctly apply its new ad policy when they allowed certain ads by religious groups to run but not ours. However, through the litigation process we believe we’ve made our point and that the Port Authority will apply its new ad policy more consistently in the future.”

31-cross display gets court setback

In *Cabral v. City of Evansville, Indiana*, the 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals on June 25 dismissed for lack of standing an appeal of an Indiana federal district court’s injunction barring the city of Evansville from permitting West Side Christian Church’s proposed display of 6-foot-tall crosses on the Riverfront area.

The district court ruled the 31 crosses would violate the Establishment Clause, reported Religion Clause. The city didn’t appeal but the church did as an intervenor.

The 7th Circuit concluded that to have standing, West Side would need to apply for and have a permit denied, which hasn’t occurred. The opinion said, “We question whether a reasonable observer would be put on notice that the ‘Cross the River’ display is strictly private speech given the sheer magnitude of a display that takes up four blocks and has two signs alerting citizens that it is a private display.”

Board changes prayer policy after Greece

The Carroll County Board of Commissioners in Maryland unanimously approved a process June 26 for opening meetings with Christian prayers to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*. The 5-4 decision said that a governing body using sectarian prayer must have a formalized process, according to the Carroll County Times, quoting County Attorney Tim Burke.

Commissioners agreed to change “We pray” in the formal process to “I pray” at the end of the prayer led by participating board members. Residents Bruce Hake and Neil Ridgely sued the county earlier over the prayers, and while the suit is still pending, the *Greece* decision may have rendered it moot.

♦ ♦ ♦

Opening prayer is back to start meetings in the town of Troutman, N.C., reported Time Warner Cable News. On July 10, the mayor and town alders were led in prayer by a local pastor. The restoring of the tradition came after the May Supreme Court ruling *Town of Greece v. Galloway*.

The board agreed to let non-Christians, including atheists, deliver invocations, during which the audience will not be asked to stand. “They have to remain seated except for the pastor, so everyone is perceived to be equal, you know. If we can get the prayer back, that’s a fair trade off, I guess,” said Mayor Elbert Richardson.

Certiorari denied in Soledad cross case

The Supreme Court declined on



June 30 to review *Mount Soledad Memorial Association v. Trunk*, a decades-old case in which FFRF member and fox-hole atheist Steve Trunk is a party. The high court said the case must first go to the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. The veterans group wanted to let it “leapfrog” to the Supreme Court after a lower federal court ruled in December that the 43-foot Christian cross erected on public land in San Diego in 1954 should come down.

“The Court of Appeals has not yet reviewed on appeal,” Justice Samuel Alito wrote. “Any review by this Court can await the decision of the Court of Appeals.”

Sending the case back to a lower court could mean the case will last at least another two to three years, Religion News Service reported.

Obama signs bill placing FDR prayer

President Barack Obama signed a bill June 30 to add President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s D-Day prayer (June 6, 1944) to the World War II Memorial in the nation’s capital.

The prayer encourages Americans to “Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moment, let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose.”

The bill requires private fundraising to have the prayer inscribed on the monument.

GOP not enamored of ‘liberal’ pope

The Hill reported July 29 that H. Res. 440, a resolution congratulating Pope Francis on his election last March and recognizing his inspirational statements and actions, has fallen victim to politics.

The resolution is stalled in the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Only 19 of its 221 co-sponsors are Republicans. Apparently, most in the GOP see the pope as too liberal. The resolution was intended to reinforce Speaker John Boehner’s invitation to the pope to address a joint session of Congress when he visits the U.S. in September 2015.

Suit: ‘Sham’ forum favored Christians

A dispute over a Christian war memorial in King, N.C., should go to trial, U.S. District Judge James Beaty ruled July 8. He also ruled that several of the city’s practices regarding religious

memorial ceremonies are unconstitutional.

Hewett v. City of King was filed by Americans United for Separation of Church and State on behalf of Steven Hewett, a decorated Afghanistan veteran and FFRF Life Member. The suit seeks removal of a Christian flag and a statue with a soldier kneeling before a cross and an end to city promotion of Christian prayers at official memorial events.

In November 2010, the city, on advice from the evangelical legal group the Alliance Defending Freedom, created a “limited public forum” in which a memorial flagpole was reserved for a rotating group of pre-approved flags. The city held a lottery and approved 52 applications.

The suit says the forum is a sham. The Christian flag flew for 47 out of 52 weeks in 2011-13. Beaty also rejected the claim that the Supreme Court decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* authorized the city’s conduct.

Ohio students get ‘released time’ credit

An Ohio law goes into effect in September that allows up to two academic credits for public high school students taking part in “released time” religious programs off-campus.

In a Cleveland Plain Dealer op-ed July 13, Gary Daniels, chief lobbyist for the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, said the law unwisely added a “fourth ‘R’ [religion] to the ‘Three R’s’ — readin’, ‘ritin’ and ‘rithmetic.’”

“Ohio students can now learn dinosaurs died off millions of years ago, yet also lived only a few thousand years ago, and potentially receive credit for both lessons,” Daniels wrote. “For their part, Ohio lawmakers deserve an ‘F’ for passing this poorly written, nonsensical mess of a law.”

Appeals court upholds Ground Zero cross

In *American Atheists Inc. v. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey*, the 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals on July 28 rejected a challenge to the display in the National September 11 Museum of a 17-foot-high “Cross at Ground Zero” made up steel beams from the World Trade Center debris after 9/11. The court ruled “the stated purpose of displaying The Cross at Ground Zero is to tell the story of how some people used faith to cope with the tragedy is genuine, and an objective observer would understand the purpose of the display to be secular.”

Way of the Cross tax exemption wrong

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott's op-ed was published July 8 in the Wisconsin State Journal



The Roman Catholic Diocese of Madison, Wis., is trying to stick Madison taxpayers with its hefty tax bill. Without much fanfare, St. Raphael's congregation, which is in the diocese, sued the city of Madison on June 18 seeking a property tax refund of \$101,124.

Madison residents should take notice. Property taxes operate much like a restaurant bill. When someone in the group shorts the bill, others at the table have to pick up the tab. All Madison taxpayers will be paying more if various tax schemes being tested by the diocese prove successful.

Two blocks from the State Capitol between West Washington Avenue and West Main Street sits prime real estate in the heart of Madison. The unused lot is assessed by the city at over \$4 million. It was once the site of St. Raphael's Cathedral, which was destroyed by fire in 2005, as well as a dilapidated school building that was purchased by the church in 2011 and torn down in 2012.

The site today is landscaped and has a walking path with stone crosses spaced throughout, which the church calls the Way of the Cross. The congregation has expressed a desire to some day build a cathedral on the site at a cost of more than \$50 million.

The good news for taxpayers is that property is presumed to be taxable unless proven otherwise. In March, the city assessor and city attorney determined St. Raphael's failed to file required exemption paperwork on time. Their refund claim for 2013 must fail on that basis, but the church has also sought an exemption for 2014.

Churches must not be allowed to hold large areas of valuable land for future development without paying taxes. The Wisconsin tax exemption law and Wisconsin Supreme Court prece-

dent make clear that exempt property must not only be owned by a church or nonprofit, it must be regularly used for an exempt purpose.

Adding religious markers to an undeveloped lot cannot transform it into an exempt use. Like all other owners, the church is obligated to pay its fair share.

While the cathedral lot remains undeveloped, the church is spending on a different construction project Downtown. In a moneymaking venture, the Holy Redeemer School building is being renovated into student rental housing. It too would be tax exempt.

The controversial law that allows this was amended last year to sunset this fall, but grandfather in existing properties. Holy Redeemer would join the Pres House as the only such tax-exempt facilities in the state. Many Latino parishioners opposed the Holy Redeemer rental project, but the almighty dollar won out.

Yet another tax avoidance plan comes from the diocese headquarters. In June, diocese officials announced updated plans to redevelop the Bishop O'Connor Catholic Pastoral Center. The plans call for market-rate rental apartments and housing that would occupy two-thirds of the building and would be targeted at those who are age 50 and older.

The Wisconsin State Journal reported that officials and the developer "assume" the property would qualify for a tax exemption.

Unused church property, student rentals and market-rate apartments neither qualify for tax exemption under the law nor are worthy of tax exemptions. What public good are the subject properties fulfilling other than appreciating in value or benefiting the church financially?

These properties use city services, such as fire and police protection, and would get a free ride at the expense of all other Madison residents. While the church is accustomed to getting a free pass, the city and Madison taxpayers must remain vigilant in preventing abuse of exemptions, which are intended to benefit the community at large.



Linda Stephens (with NOW sign) at a rally she organized at the Federal Building in Rochester, N.Y., protesting a Catholic group which was protesting the Affordable Care Act's birth control mandate. "The theme of both of our protest and theirs was 'Support Religious Freedom,'" Linda said. "Of course, we each defined that term differently. I had signs printed up that read 'Religious Dogma, Bad For Your Health.'"

Meet a Litigious Member

Name: Linda Stephens.

Where I live: Greece, N.Y., a suburb of Rochester.

Where and when I was born: Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16, 1942.

Family: Kathryn Gibson (mother, 91) and five younger siblings, one deceased.

Education: B.A. in English (Western Michigan University), M.A. in English (SUNY-Brockport), master of library science (SUNY-Geneseo), Ed.D. (Syracuse University).

Occupation: Retired librarian.

How I got where I am today: By reading, traveling, observing life and thinking.

These are a few of my favorite things: Poetry, flowers, indie films, travel, Bruce Springsteen.

These are not: Fox News, anti-abortion protesters, religious bigots.

A quotation I like: "Come, come my conservative friend, wipe the dew from your spectacles and see that the world is moving." (Elizabeth Cady Stanton)

My doubts about religion started: In my high school years, but they solidified in 1962 when I was 19 and attended a symposium titled "Is there a God?" at Albion College in Michigan.

Where I'm headed: To England in the fall to visit "Hardy Country." A writer for The New Yorker called Thomas Hardy "God's Undertaker," and Hardy made no bones about the fact that he was a nonbeliever. In fact, one of

Hardy's most famous poems is titled "God's Funeral." In it, he describes a procession carrying the corpse of the "man-projected Figure . . . whom we can no longer keep alive."

Before I die: My wish list includes a woman president in the White House, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, early retirements by Justices Scalia, Thomas, Alito and Roberts and the death of racism. (A few pipe dreams in there, I know.)

Ways I promote freethought: I was the atheist plaintiff in the *Town of Greece v. Galloway* Supreme Court decision. I am an event organizer for the Atheist Community of Rochester (ACoR). I am the vice president and web administrator for the Rochester chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. I was vice chair of Monroe Citizens for Public Education and Religious Liberty before it disbanded.

Other activism: I am past president of the Greater Rochester chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Person in history I admire and why: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, lead author of the "Declaration of Sentiments," which was presented at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 in Seneca Falls, N.Y., and which kicked off the first women's rights and women's suffrage movements in the United States.

I also admire Elizabeth because she believed that "The heyday of woman's life is the shady side of fifty."

Proselytizing teacher 'no longer employed'

Lewis Public Schools in Lewis, Kansas, will no longer allow staff to facilitate distribution by the Gideons of religious materials. A complainant contacted FFRF after a fifth-grade teacher told students to cross the street unescorted to receive a bible. The teacher lined the students up, told them to cross the street to get the bibles, but did not accompany the children because she believed this made her actions legal.

When the complainant's child refused a bible because the student's family was not religious, the teacher asked the student, "Do you always do what your parents tell you to do?"

The complainant noted that bible distribution by Gideons at the school has been going on for 30-some years.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter on May 21 to Superintendent Virgil Ritchie, pointing out why forcing students to accept religious literature is predatory and illegal. On June 10, Ritchie responded that it had been decided that "Lewis Elementary School will not allow The Gideon Society to distribute materials during the school day or on school grounds. The teacher mentioned in your letter is no longer employed by the school district."

Recruit a Member Sample Copies for \$2

Send \$2 with the name and address of each person you wish to receive a sample copy of Freethought Today to: FFRF, P.O. Box 750, Madison WI 53701 **Freedom depends upon freethinkers** (Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)

FFRF's New York Times ad creates stir

"No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body." — Margaret Sanger
(Her motto: "No gods — No masters.")

DOGMA SHOULD NOT TRUMP OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES

ALL-MALE, ALL-ROMAN CATHOLIC MAJORITY ON SUPREME COURT PUTS RELIGIOUS WRONGS OVER WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Are you dismayed and alarmed by the Supreme Court's June 30 Hobby Lobby ruling? The Supreme Court's ultra-conservative, Roman Catholic majority — Justices Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Kennedy and Thomas — has sided with zealous fundamentalists who equate contraception with abortion. The court has granted employers with "sincere" religious objections the right to deny women employees insurance coverage for birth control.

This ruling marks a turning point in the struggle to uphold civil liberties in the face of relentless attacks by the Religious Right. In Citizens United, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations are people. Now, the Supreme Court asserts that corporations have "religious rights" that surpass those of women. In the words of Justice John Paul Stevens, "Corporations have no consciences, no beliefs, no feelings, no thoughts, no desires" — but real women do.

Allowing employers to decide what kind of birth control an employee can use is not, as the Supreme Court ruled, an "exercise of religion." It is an exercise of tyranny.

CONGRESS MUST REPEAL RFRA

EMPLOYERS SHOULD HAVE NO RIGHT TO IMPOSE THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS UPON WORKERS

The Hobby Lobby ruling is based not on the Constitution, but on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, misguidedly enacted by Congress in 1993. RFRA radically redefines "religious freedom," according believers extreme religious liberty, exempting them from laws they claim create substantial burdens on their free exercise of religion. Read the Freedom From Religion Foundation's amicus brief against Hobby Lobby, written by noted state/church attorney Marci A. Hamilton, to learn why RFRA is unconstitutional: ffrf.org/Hamilton

FIGHT BACK!

WON'T YOU JOIN FFRF IN WAKING UP AMERICA TO THE GROWING DANGERS OF THEOCRACY?

JOIN FFRF • DONATE TO OUR LEGAL FUND • ASK FOR A FREE COPY OF FFRF'S NEWSPAPER, FREETHOUGHT TODAY • 1-800-335-4021

Join our national association of 20,000 freethinkers (atheists, agnostics and other skeptics) working to keep religion and government separate. FFRF is a 501(c)(3) educational charity founded in 1978. Membership includes 10 issues a year of our newspaper Freethought Today, and supports FFRF's vital legal advocacy and litigation.

FREEDOM DEPENDS ON FREETHINKERS

Freedom From Religion Foundation
P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (800) 335-4021

☐ I would like to become a member. (Includes 10 issues of *Freethought Today* newspaper.)

☐ I would like to donate to FFRF's Legal Fund. \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____ Phone/Email _____

Make payable to "FFRF" Dues & donations are tax-deductible.

Annual Membership Dues

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Household	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsoring	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Member	\$1,000
<input type="checkbox"/> "After Life"	\$5,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$25

"Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as by the abuses of power."
— James Madison
The Federalist #63

FFRF.ORG FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

FFRF protects membership confidentiality and does not divulge, rent, sell or give away its mailing list.

FFRF ran a full-page ad in the July 3 New York Times to protest the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby ruling that is bringing in many new members (welcome, all) and is still creating a stir.

Featuring a portrait of birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger, whose motto was "No Gods — No Masters," the ad criticizes the "all-male, all-Roman Catholic majority" on the court for putting "religious wrongs over women's rights."

That caught the attention of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who facetiously thanked FFRF for showing there is still anti-Catholic bigotry. Dolan claimed the ad was a "drippingly bigoted blast in the hospitable pages of The New York Times."

The near-apoplectic Bill Donohue, Catholic League president, of course claimed FFRF was bigoted for pointing out that six of the nine court members are Catholic, with five of them very committed and reactionary Catholics.

FFRF's 2012 full-page ad in the Times was titled "It's time to consider quitting the Catholic Church." (The paper made FFRF rephrase the original headline, which was the much punchier: "It's time to quit the Catholic Church.")

Dolan is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which the ad criticized for openly declaring war on the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive mandate and for placing dogma above humanity.


Online newscaster Cenk Uygur of "The Young Turks" featured an amusing analysis July 13 of the reaction to the latest ad, running clips of Fox News going after FFRF. Andrea Tantaros emceed a round table going after FFRF and the Times, showing a close-up of the "Dogma should not trump civil liberties" part of the ad.

"The ad doesn't go after Catholics. It says we don't want the Catholics to force their religion on us," Uygur pointed out. "If there's so much bigotry against Catholics, how did so many of them wind up on the Supreme Court?"

FFRF has taken the lead in calling for repeal of the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which was the basis for the Hobby Lobby ruling.

"None of our civil rights, established after decades and decades of struggle and education, will be safe until RFRA is overturned," commented Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. (See more about ruling on page 5.)

What Is a Freethinker?

 **free-think-er**
n. A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

This is a reduced version of FFRF's New York Times ad.

Members' atheist invocations draw crowds

Dan Courtney, an FFRF Life Member and engineer who's active with the Atheist Society of Rochester and is past president of the Free Thinkers of Upstate New York, delivered the first atheist invocation at a town board meeting in Greece, N.Y., after the U.S. Supreme Court decision in May that said Greece's practice of allowing sectarian prayer was OK as long as the town didn't discriminate.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor came from Wisconsin to lend moral support (and promptly sat down during the "under God" part of the Pledge of Allegiance). The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle reported more than 100 people and 14 news cameras were present.

Courtney said he was surprised by all the media attention. "I would like it to get to a point where this would not be news at all, but at the same time, I appreciate the attention because this is important in a society that to a large extent doesn't respect nonbelief."

Many in the audience held supportive signs such as "I Stand for Secular Values." A protester held a "JESUS SAVES. Ye must be BORN AGAIN" sign and said he felt "compelled" to come. He wouldn't identify himself, the paper reported.

Lisa Gleason of Greece wore a shirt that said "I'm an atheist because . . . I have read it" on the front and "1 Corinthians 14:34 Women should remain silent in the Churches" on the back.

"I think this will spur people across the country to push harder," she said.

Dan Courtney, Greece, N.Y. City Council, 7-15-14

Thank you, members of the Town Board. Thank you, Supervisor Rielich, for allowing me to offer the invocation.

Freethinkers, atheists, nonbelievers, whatever label you wish, this group comprises a significant part of our population. I am honored to be providing an invocation on their behalf and on behalf of all the citizens of the town of Greece.

On July 4, 1776, the 56 men who pledged their lives to the document that changed the course of history,

agreed to the central tenet that, "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

More than 238 years later, the central premise still echoes, however faintly, from the town hall to the white-columned halls of Washington. Yet this premise, this foundation necessary for a free and flourishing society, is today, more than ever, under assault. This central pillar of a free society; this notion that is deeply heretical to authoritarian culture, proclaims that it is from the people that moral authority is derived. It is that within us, the citizens, that knowledge and wisdom must emerge.

The preservation of this premise does not come from accepting the status quo, but by asserting our rights and exercising our duties. That this premise still endures testifies to its truth, and we can say with confidence that it is in seeking the counsel of our conscience that we find the beginning of wisdom. It is in the exercise of our duty as citizens that we find the beginning of knowledge.

We, as citizens, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega of our destiny, are not, as the great philosopher Immanuel Kant warned, mere means to the ends of another, but we are ends in ourselves.

This basic premise, this profound idea, guides us such that we need not kneel to any king, and we need not bow to any tyrant.

So I ask all officials present here, as guarantors of our Founders' revolutionary proclamation, to heed the counsel of the governed, to seek the wisdom of all citizens, and to honor the enlightened wisdom and the profound courage of those 56 brave men.

Linda Allewalt, Secular invocation, Shelbyville, Ky., City Council, 7-17-14

Good evening. As this is a secular invocation and not a prayer, there is no need to stand during my presentation. Tonight I would like to have us think about "blessings."

Last year the council passed a set of resolutions outlining their new program for including invocations in city council meetings. In the resolutions, the council stated that the main purpose of an opening invocation was "for



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor was on hand, along with representatives of several other national secular groups, to witness the atheist invocation by Dan Courtney in Greece, N.Y. From left are Greg Lipper, Linda Stephens, Dan Courtney, Susan Galloway, David Niose, Gaylor and Ron Lindsay.

the benefit and blessings of the council."

The word "blessings" drew my attention because it is a word heard often in our society in differing contexts. I wondered what the term really means. The origins of the word "bless" are from Old English and its meaning is connected to a human action. It refers to the action of sprinkling blood on a pagan altar. I don't think that is what the council had in mind.

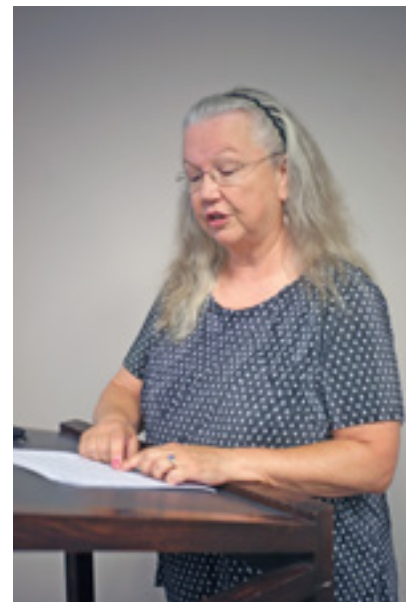
But what did they have in mind when using that term? It appears from reading the resolutions and how the invocation system is set up that they feel the source of blessings comes exclusively from a divine entity. But is that true? And what do "blessings" have to do with the realm of government?

The founders of our country provided us with a clue in this paragraph. "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The founders did not mention a divine source for their "blessings," but a human one. . . we the people. We the people take the actions and make the laws to secure our blessings for ourselves and for future generations. Following these words are the contents of our Constitution . . . a vehicle to assist us in securing our blessings of liberty. The Constitution makes no mention of a deity in creating this vehicle, and its authors chose not to invoke blessings from a divine entity during their deliberations.

I would appeal to the council and those in attendance here to consider this:

In government, blessings are the actions we take and the decisions we make out of our common human de-



Linda Allewalt gives her secular invocation. Photo courtesy of The Sentinel News

sire to form communities and make them successful. The council's blessings come from working with fellow council members in trying to fulfill their roles as representatives of all the people. They also come from the citizens who take the time to attend and offer their advice, their expertise, and even their criticism. These blessings do not need to be invoked. They are at your fingertips every day.

So I would encourage the council and all those who make the efforts to ensure the success of our community to consider these observable and measurable blessings — to consider their true source, and to never forget to count them!

I wish you a peaceful and productive meeting.

Editor's note: Linda adds that since she followed up her invocation with a statement during the public comments section of the meeting advising the council to shut the discriminatory program down, "I think this is my first and last invocation!"

Nothing fails like prayer!

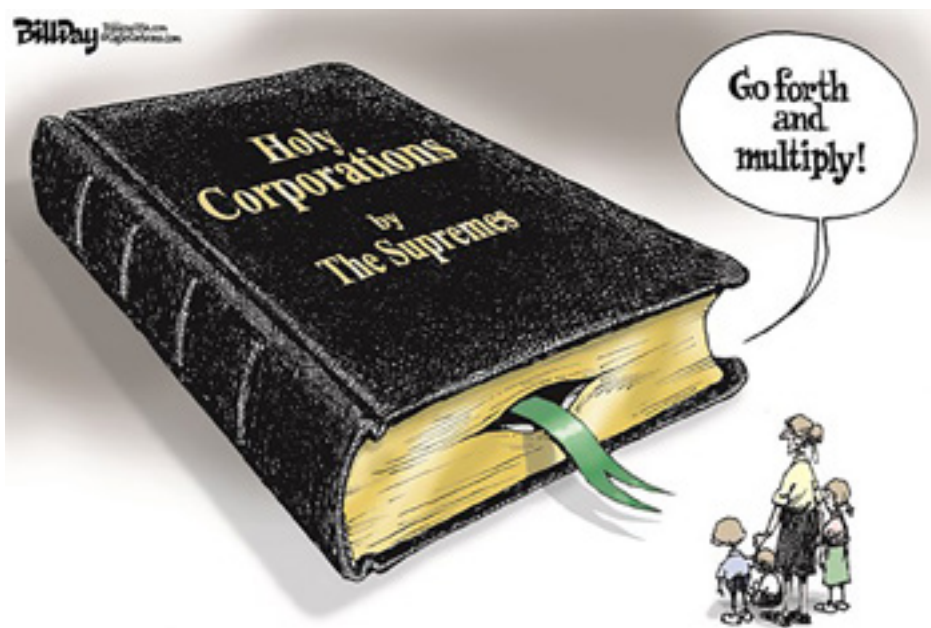
The U.S. Supreme Court unwisely "blessed" sectarian prayers at local government meeting in its *Town of Greece v. Galloway* decision. If the Supreme Court won't uphold our godless and entirely secular Constitution — adopted at a prayerless constitutional convention — it's up to us. It's up to you!

We'd like to see secular citizens flood government meetings with secular invocations that illustrate why gov-

ernment prayers are unnecessary, ineffective, embarrassing, exclusionary, divisive or just plain silly.

The "best" secular invocation will be invited to open FFRF's annual convention, receiving an all-expenses-paid trip (this year at the Los Angeles Biltmore Oct. 24-26), a plaque and an honorarium of \$500.

Learn more at: ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer



FFRF victories: It pays to complain

Bible ads take permanent vacation

An advertisement for vacation bible school in front of the Caraway Public Library in Caraway, Ark., has been removed. The sign, an electronic, scrolling text marquee, promoted a bible program for children at a local church.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote to Mayor Barry Riley on June 13, noting the Establishment Clause violation. “The best policy would be for the city to disallow such advertising,” Elliott suggested.

Riley responded the same day: “The message on the sign has been removed.”

FFRF thwarts school abstinence assembly

Onaway Area Community Schools in Onaway, Mich., will no longer invite speakers with a proselytizing agenda. Matt Fradd, who describes himself on his website as “a Catholic apologist and speaker,” was invited to give a presentation April 29 to Onaway High School students on the subject of abstinence.

According to Fradd’s website, his presentation “challenges audience members to open their minds and hearts and embrace the Church’s teachings on human sexuality.” Students were reportedly told, “Romantic love is impossible without chastity.”

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Superintendent Rod Fullerton on May 20, citing constitutional concerns over the religious content, adding that regardless of the motive, inviting such a speaker “gives the appearance that Onaway Area Community School District endorses the program’s message.”

Replying on June 18, Fullerton said the school “had no intention of violating any laws with this assembly” and that it “will not be participating in this type of assembly in the future.”

Bible quote off township website

Inappropriate religious material brought to FFRF’s attention by a concerned individual has been removed from the official website of the township of Watersmeet, Mich.

The bible quote, accredited to “Mr. Jesus Christ,” which we will politely refrain from quoting again here, endorsed a belief in heaven, sin and Jesus.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Township Supervisor Mike Rogers on June 16 to relay the information that “Courts have continually held that townships may not display religious messages.”

Rogers agreed moments after receiving the letter electronically to remove the quote.

School to review policy on religion

Due to FFRF’s intervention, Manierre Elementary School in Chicago relocated its kindergarten graduation from a church sanctuary to its banquet hall.

On June 10, Staff Attorney Sam Grover, acting on reports from a concerned community member that the



Midlothian Independent School District in Midlothian, Texas, will no longer display this 2-by-3-foot plaque at Mt. Peak Elementary. On June 26, Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent a letter to Superintendent Jerome Stewart, explaining that the plaque “offends the Constitution.” Legal counsel responded July 17, advising that “the plaque will be removed from the Mt. Peak Elementary School as requested.”

ceremony was to be hosted in Moody Church, wrote Barbara Byrd-Bennett, chief executive officer of Chicago Public Schools about the clear constitutional violation.

The next day, school attorney James Bebley replied that, “the school has arranged for the captioned ceremony to be moved to the banquet hall.” And “at our administrator training this summer, we plan to address again the prohibition on the use of religious sites for public school events.”

No more religious rituals at school

Rockwall Independent School District in Rockwall, Texas, will no longer permit prayer at any school-sponsored events. According to a local complainant, Rockwall High School’s June 10 graduation included a religious prayer led by a local police officer. The graduation was one of two scheduled that week.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover wrote to Superintendent Jeff Bailey on July 11. “Graduation should be an inclusive, unifying event designed to celebrate the accomplishments and prospects of the graduates. Including religious references does exactly the opposite, isolating non-Christian and nonreligious students, cheapening their participation by sending the message that they are outsiders at their own graduation and in their own community.”

Later that day, counsel for Rockwall ISD replied that the district “has agreed to take [the] appropriate steps to ensure that religious rituals are not part of graduation ceremonies or any school-sponsored events in the future.”

The Rockwall-Heath High School graduation, which took place after the FFRF complaint, did not include prayer.

Swan song for graduation prayer

Graduation ceremonies in Forsyth County School District in Cummings, Ga., will no longer include religious prayer.

On May 24, Forsyth Central High School’s graduation reportedly included a student-delivered invocation and benediction, both of which specifically mentioned God and Jesus.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover wrote Superintendent L.C. Evans on May 30: “School officials may not invite a student to give any type of prayer, invocation or benediction at a public high school-sponsored event.”

District counsel replied July 13: “The issues which you raise in your letter will not be a part of next year’s graduation program at Forsyth Central High School.”

Satisfied complainant: FFRF is ‘awesome’

A concerned resident reported church ads in front of Castle Rock Middle School and Castle View High School. The signs advertised Sunday morning worship at Eternal Rock Lutheran Church and Summit Church. The churches rent from the school district, but have routinely left advertising banners up for months on school property.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote a letter of complaint to the Douglas County School District on July 8. The next day, the complainant confirmed that FFRF’s letter had a positive effect. “You guys are awesome — the signs are down now!”

FFRF intervention saves prayer addicts

Prayer will no longer be sanctioned

at Piedmont High School athletic events in West Piedmont, Ala.

Previously, it was the practice for a Christian prayer to be delivered over the school’s public address system before football games. A graduate and Piedmont athletics booster reached out to FFRF, noting that he found the prayers “very offensive to those who do not share in the belief of prayer,” and that a student should not be “subjected to ridicule for not participating.”

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert notified Superintendent Matt Akin of the unconstitutional action on March 20. Akin responded July 2 after two follow-up letters: “Beginning immediately, the Piedmont City School District will no longer allow student-led prayer at athletic events.”

Navy agrees to allow equal access

Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) and associated clinics in Bremerton, Wash., will no longer block minority religious Web pages. Their Internet filtering policy banned websites of non-monotheistic religions.

A concerned individual was distressed to learn that the online Church of Satan was “blocked for reasons of Cult and Occult,” along with other non-mainstream religions such as Scientology, Wicca and various pagan religions. He described the discriminatory practice as “an outrage,” noting that monotheistic websites, including the outrageously bigoted Westboro Baptist Church’s site, were readily available.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover wrote the NHB on May 1, explaining that the policy was discriminatory. On July 15, Lt. Cmdr. David Peck reported that the policy had been changed to allow sites such as wicca.org and churchofsatan.org.

Church graduation ceremonies moving

Graduation ceremonies for Perry Local School District, Massillon, Ohio, will no longer be held at the Faith Family Church. From now on, nonreligious students wishing to participate in one of life’s most momentous occasions will not be excluded from doing so.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote to Superintendent Martin Bowe on Feb. 17, informing him that “It is unconstitutional for a public high school to force, compel, or coerce its graduation students, their parents, teachers, and other members of their families or friends, to violate their rights of conscience at a graduation ceremony.”

Bowe’s May 15 reply said the district has “agreed to find a different site for the 2015 graduating class.”

Bible distribution stopped in school

A South Carolina school district has agreed to stop allowing the distribution of bibles on school property due to a July 3 letter from Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott to Superintendent David Havird, Anderson School District One in Anderson.

FFRF’s complainant reported that a man told students they could take a bible as a staffer stood by outside an el-



FFRF’s interns are an invaluable resource for busy staff. From left are Noah Bunnell, Aaron Loudenslager, Sam Erickson, Neal Fitzgerald and Maddy Ziegler. Thank you all!

ementary school library, with bibles on the table.

Elliott’s letter addressed illegal events that occurred in April, when the bibles were distributed to students at Powdersville Elementary School in Greenville, S.C. “It is unfortunate that some adults view public schools as ripe territory for religious recruitment,” wrote Elliott, adding that courts have held that “religious instruction is for parents to determine, not public school educators.” Elliott noted that the distribution also violated school policy.

District counsel responded July 21 that “the district will ensure that bibles are not made available to elementary school-aged students during the school day on school premises.”

‘Pervasive religious culture’ addressed

Lamar County School District staff in Purvis, Miss., will no longer be permitted to proselytize to students. A Sumrall Middle School student contacted FFRF in April about a teacher who talked about “why our country needs God” and the “war on Christmas.” Another teacher apparently held an Easter event and spoke about “the Rapture” and the anti-Christ.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover noted the violations June 20 in a letter to interim Superintendent Tess Smith, also citing faculty participation in prayer at Sumrall Elementary School and a “pervasive culture of proselytization in the district.”

Smith responded July 8 and agreed to “meet with each of the staff members mentioned, including a follow-up meeting with the school principal.” Smith said she’s organizing an in-service for principals to give them “the necessary guidance to train their staff in the future regarding constitutional issues.”

FFRF ends prayer at school banquet

There will no longer be teacher-led prayer or any prayer at the end-of-year banquet for Sarah Scott Middle School in Terre Haute, Ind.

A family member of a student contacted FFRF with information that, like ceremonies from previous years, a school-sponsored banquet May 27 celebrating the top 10 students in each grade featured teacher-led prayer.

“Everyone is expected to bow their heads while a teacher leads the prayer,”

reported the complainant. “The school is fairly diverse, so I’m sure I’m not the only person that is uncomfortable with the school trying to force everyone to pray.”

Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent a letter May 30 to Superintendent Daniel Tanoos of Vigo County School Corp., declaring that, “The district should make certain that teachers in its schools are not unlawfully and inappropriately indoctrinating students in religious matters by encouraging them to engage in prayer. Schoolchildren already feel significant pressure to conform from their peers. They must not be subjected to similar pressure from their teachers, especially on religious questions.”

After a July 8 follow-up inquiry, district counsel replied July 17 that each building principal has been told that “teacher-led prayer with students present will cease, as it is prohibited by the Constitution and should not be allowed.”

Georgia Air Force base grounds job ad bias

Moody Air Force Base near Valdosta, Ga., has removed a requirement that only Catholics need apply for a position as music director.

FFRF was alerted to the July 15 job ad, which requested a “Catholic Music Director to provide worship services at Moody AFB Chapel.” The posting specified that “the contractor shall maintain a lifestyle consistent with Catholic principles” for the position, and said the applicant would “not be required to perform duties that are incompatible with the Catholic faith.”

Staff Attorney Sam Grover’s July 18 complaint letter noted that the religious test violates the equal employment provisions of the Civil Rights Act, which says military departments may not discriminate on the basis of religion.

Within 15 minutes of receiving the complaint, an Air Force representative called to apologize for impermissible language in “all of the solicitations” and said the base intends to “modify the verbiage” in all of its job postings and remove the “Catholic lifestyle” mention.

Prayer breakfast promotion stopped

Putnam County in Carmel, N.Y., will no longer use county email to promote prayer breakfasts. Last fall, the director

of personnel invited county employees to attend the 22nd Annual Putnam County Leadership Prayer Breakfast. The email included a bible verse from 2 Chronicles: “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive them, and heal their land.”

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent three letters to the county, starting March 17. County counsel responded July 10: “The individual who sent the email in question regarding the Prayer Breakfast event has been advised not to send such notices by County email in the future.”

Baccalaureate will include disclaimer

Columbian High School in Tiffin, Ohio, will no longer be involved with a baccalaureate service for seniors. The June 7 baccalaureate at Trinity United Church of Christ was coordinated with school faculty, including the principal, his secretary and the choir director.

The religious service was listed on the school’s graduation checklist and promoted on the school calendar. Additionally, the graduation FAQ on the school’s website encouraged graduates and their families to attend.

On June 12, Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Superintendent Vicki Wheatley of Tiffin City Schools. Due to the school’s “promotion of the worship service on its school website, students will perceive the baccalaureate service as school-sponsored,” Markert wrote.

Wheatley responded June 25 that “future District publications regarding a baccalaureate service will include a disclaimer indicating the event is not school-sponsored, it is an optional event, and that the District does not endorse any message espoused.”

Wheatley said she has “reminded the appropriate District employees of the policies and limitations discussed above, and [has] clarified the District’s expectations.”

Georgia district agrees to prayer curbs

Future graduations at Bremen City High School in Bremen, Ga., will not include prayer, at FFRF’s behest. A religious photo of prayer has also been removed from the Bremen City Schools Facebook page.

The school’s May 24 graduation included opening and closing prayers. Each lasted several minutes and addressed the Christian “Heavenly Father, we thank you.”

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote the district June 6, noting other recent violations in the district, including a photo on the district website of the football team praying and an elementary school administrator leading kindergarteners in prayer.

The district responded June 17, saying that “the phrase ‘invocation’ will not be used in next year’s graduation program.” Additionally, the “superintendent has removed that photo” in question.

Prayer off football team pregame menu

Illegal pregame prayer at football team meals has been halted at Alexander High School in Douglasville, Ga.

According to reports by a concerned individual, the varsity football team had been supplied pregame meals by Pray’s Mill Baptist Church. A pastor was present at the meals and at most of the practices and games.

At the end of the mandatory meals, the pastor would deliver a “pseudo-sermon” and ask those present to bow their heads and pray. The complainant said the prayer “makes several nonbeliever athletes uncomfortable as well, but because they’re students on the team, they can’t just ‘step out’ and not participate or risk banishment.”

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote Superintendent Gordon Pritz on May 27. District counsel replied June 17 that Pritz “has discussed with school administration and appropriate staff members the legal issues that you raised. . . . To the extent there existed any issue with a prayer or religious talk being given to students on the team during a team event by local clergy, there will be no such activity during next football season.”

The district was successfully sued by Doug Jager, son of a longtime FFRF member, over pregame invocations in the late 1980s. Doug was a member of the marching band. In Jager v. Douglas County District, the Supreme Court in 1989 let stand a ruling in Doug’s favor by the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

Jesus vanishes from department’s Facebook

The police department in Jacksonville, Ala., has removed and will no longer display religious postings on its official Facebook page. The posts included an image with the words “Happy Birthday Jesus,” an image of a nativity, a number of bible verses, a picture promoting the “National Day of Prayer for Law Enforcement,” a picture of a man carrying a “Police Officer’s Bible” and a link to a Christian website with police officers singing a Christian song.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert contacted Jacksonville Chief of Police T.L. Thompson on Dec. 31. After two follow-up letters, Thompson finally replied July 2: “That post and similar ones were deleted from that account and no new posts of this nature have been posted.”

FFRF halts public school prayers

Ignacio School District in Ignacio, Colo., will no longer feature prayers at certain ceremonies held throughout the academic year.

A complainant reported to FFRF that schools included prayers before graduation, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas ceremonies. It was also reported that two prayers are offered at each of these events, one to the Christian god and another to a Ute Native American god.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter Oct. 18, explaining that the district has a legal duty to remain neutral toward religion.

After receiving a follow-up letter, the district responded June 23: “We have discontinued that practice.”

The response sets a record for the most concise letter of compliance an FFRF attorney has ever received.

— Compiled by publicist Lauryn Seering and intern Noah Bunnell

FFRF Legal Victories

Cross removed from Wash. public park

FFRF has secured the removal of religious symbols from a public park in Clark County, Wash.

In Whipple Creek Regional Park, a Latin cross with a bible verse was installed at the top of Carousel Hill. The plaque read, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him. And He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6.”

On June 26, Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert alerted Clark County to the constitutional violation. The complainant wrote FFRF on July 2 to confirm that employees of Clark County “have removed the cross from Whipple Creek Park.”

Proselytizing teacher ‘no longer employed’

Lewis Public Schools in Lewis, Kan., will no longer allow staff to facilitate distribution by the Gideons of religious materials. A complainant contacted FFRF after a fifth-grade teacher told students to cross the street unescorted to receive a bible. The teacher lined the students up, told them to cross the street to get the bibles, but did not accompany the children because she believed this made her actions legal.

When the complainant’s child refused a bible because the student’s

family was not religious, the teacher asked the student, “Do you always do what your parents tell you to do?”

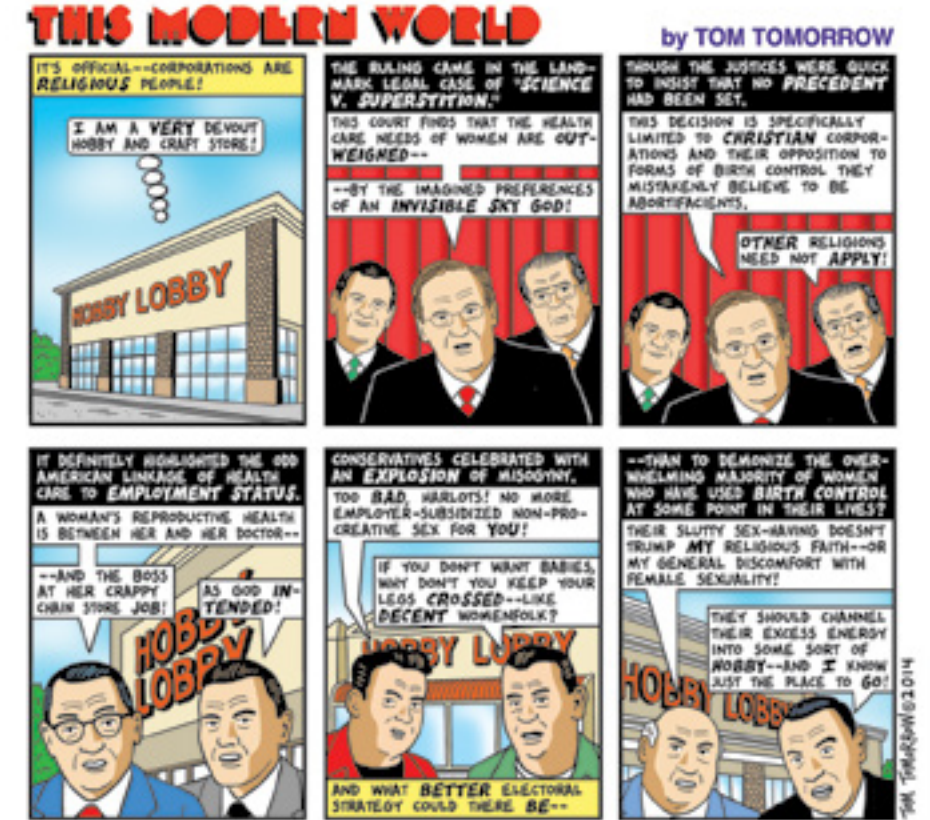
The complainant noted that bible distribution by Gideons at the school has been going on for 30-some years.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter on May 21 to Superintendent Virgil Ritchie, pointing out why forcing students to accept religious literature is predatory and illegal. On June 10, Ritchie responded that it had been decided that “Lewis Elementary School will not allow The Gideon Society to distribute materials during the school day or on school grounds. The teacher mentioned in your letter is no longer employed by the school district.”

Wash. youth pastors voted off the island

After a series of complaints by parents and students spanning over a decade, Bainbridge Island School District, Bainbridge Island, Wash., will no longer allow youth pastors access to impressionable students during school hours.

Several concerned parents and students reported to FFRF that three youth pastors from local churches were regularly granted access to Woodward Middle School students during lunchtime. The pastors were associated with Young Life, a Christian organization



whose mission is “[i]ntroducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.”

The middle school previously received multiple complaints from both students and parents about the Young Life pastors. In 2000, the school attempted to develop policies meant to curb aggressive proselytizing in schools, but youth pastors circumvented the measures.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a strongly worded letter to the district Oct. 29, explaining why the multiple violations are so egregious. “BDIS has been complicit in granting religious re-

cruiters continuous, unmonitored access to school students for quite some time. . . . The length of time over which this violation has been allowed to continue is deplorable.”

Assistant Superintendent Peter Bang-Knudsen replied June 23 that the district has taken several steps, including hiring an independent investigator whose findings were reported to the school board. FFRF was informed that the three youth pastors were removed from their volunteer duties, and significant revisions on volunteer policy were made to the volunteer handbook.

Meet a Wisconsin Member

Name: Edwin H. Neumann.
Where I live: The La Crosse area in southwestern Wisconsin.
Where and when I was born: Escanaba, Mich., in 1963.
Family: My wife Christine and three brilliant kids, Alyssa (22), Sylvia (19) and Edwin Nicholas (17).

Education: Bachelor’s in biology and chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and an O.D. degree from the Illinois College of Optometry. I’m forever a student of ancient history and the natural sciences.

Occupation: Optometrist by day, writer by moonlight. I won’t quit my day job — yet.

How I got where I am today: Studied diligently, worked hard and tried to never stop learning (especially from my mistakes).

Where I’m headed: Hopefully to publish a novel I’ve written called *Mythos Christos*. It details a recent find of a 1,600-year-old archaeological “treasure hunt” set up by Hypatia of Alexandria, where the treasure is the truth about the mythic origins of Christianity.

One timeline occurs in the past (historical fiction) and one in modern times (adventure/suspense). I’m attempting to publish via the traditional route, but it’s extremely difficult to break into that world as a debut novelist.

Person in history I admire: Einstein, because his ideas were so fantastically counterintuitive. Gravity warps space and bends light? Time dilation and the twin paradox? The energy tied up in matter is proportional to the speed of light squared? These things blow my mind.

A quotation I like: The old Roman proverb, “Ubi dubium ibi libertas” (In doubt there is freedom). Hey, my Sun-

day mornings are all free now.
These are a few of my favorite things: The new (and old) “Cosmos” series, reading and writing, hiking the bluffs with the kids, my chess club. Oh, and the big bang theory (the show and the actual theory).

These are not: Strident non-Bayesians. Bayes’ theorem is a mathematical equation that can be used to quantify the probability of whether or not an event occurred, a person existed or a particular belief is well-grounded. To simplify, I guess you could characterize non-Bayesians as those who argue fallaciously and do not base their conclusions on rational thought. (Theists come to mind.)

My doubts about religion started: Early. My mom made it a point to have all her eight kids confirmed in the Lutheran Church. Though my dad was agnostic and only showed up at church during Christmas performances, he went along with her in this.

Between the ages of 10 and 16, however, I played a lot of chess with my grandpa, a hardcore atheist. He’d regale me with tales of his early years in the Lutheran parochial school (early 1900s). One story left a lasting impression on me:

All the boys and some of the girls in Herbert Neumann’s class were beaten on a regular basis and it was a mark of toughness not to cry out during the licks. When a new girl joined the school, it became apparent she was afflicted with a tremor that worsened in stressful situations. The “teacher” ordered her to be still, and when she shook all the more, he beat her repeatedly with a hickory stick. This scene seared itself into my grandpa’s memory and led him to abandon the church and disparage religious indoctrination. In his retirement, he even invited



Ed Neumann (right) and Richard Carrier at a freethought festival at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

local clergy to his house to debate with them.

When I was 12, he bought me a copy of Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason* and taught me, to my mom’s distress, to doubt all religious claims. At my confirmation, I lied to the minister about believing in God and his savior son. I’m not proud of that, but I felt I had to appease my mother in her confirmation quest.

Before I die: It might be a pipe dream, but I’d like to see our country go the way of many European nations, with a secular government and a non-theist majority. I also want to visit historical sites in Italy and Greece.

Ways I promote freethought: I head a group of writers from the La Crosse Area Freethought Society (lcafs.org) who contribute a monthly column called “A Freethinker’s Perspective”

to the La Crosse Tribune. It’s one of the few newspapers in the country that gives nontheists space to publish their heathen opinions.

I also helped support renowned historian Richard Carrier’s recent endeavor, which culminated in his two groundbreaking books: *Proving History* and *On the Historicity of Jesus*. Using Bayesian methodology, these books demonstrate the likelihood that Jesus never actually existed. Though certainly scholarly, they’re accessible enough that even I can understand them.

I’m just proud to have played any role in advancing that endeavor, and freethought itself, forward. I think my grandpa would’ve been proud, too.

I wish you’d have asked me: “Do you have a literary agent for your own book?” Not yet. Do you know any good ones?



2014 Lake Hypatia 'Glorious Fourth' Alabama Freethought Association

A group photo at the July 3-5 event in front of Freethought Hall (auditorium at left).



Alice Cleveland, chapter historian, poet, professor and longtime chapter and FFRF volunteer.



In front of Fearn Park at Lake Hypatia is Michael Scott, director of FFRF's new Metro Atlanta chapter, who spoke at the event. With him are his daughter, Madison, and Lia, his wife. The park is named for benefactor Blanche Fearn.



Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor by the freethought "star" created in the 1990s to honor "all women freethinkers of the 20th century." Others named include founder Anne Gaylor, Alabama feminists and freethought activists Patricia Cleveland, Michele Wilson and Blanche Fearn.



Janet Heimlich, an award-winning journalist, spoke about religious maltreatment of children, based on her book *Breaking Their Will*.



Two former ministers who lost faith in faith, then found secular success are FFRF Co-President Dan Barker (left), author of *Losing Faith in Faith* and *Godless*, and Jerry DeWitt, author of *Hope After Faith*.



Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel helped Co-President Dan Barker "claim" Lake Hypatia for freethought with his signature gesture. Seidel spoke at the event about state/church complaints he's handled from Alabama.



The youngest participant at the Glorious Fourth.



From left are Anna Aldrich and Pat Cleveland. Pat is Alabama Freethought president and Anna is treasurer of FFRF's longest-lived chapter, which puts on the annual "Glorious Fourth" event at Lake Hypatia.

Go to
flic.kr/ps/2DSJR6
to see more
event photos.



Veterans gathered July 4 in front of FFRF's granite monument, dedicated "in memory of ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES and the countless FREETHINKERS who have served this country with honor and distinction." It was created and carved by Bill Teague, with words by Anne Nicol Gaylor.

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Cesar Chin, Seminole County, **FL**: Failure to report suspected child abuse, abandonment and neglect. Chin, pastor at Fellowship Church, allegedly knew that Normail Reynoso was molesting 3 female relatives, all under age 12, for years but kept quiet. He said he never reported it because he didn't have proof, deputies said. *Source: WFTV, 7-18-14*

Stefano M. Cavalletti, 45, Carciano di Stresa, **Italy**: Possession of illegal drugs with intent to supply. Cavalletti, a Catholic pastor, had vanished for 2 days, forcing the parish to get a substitute to say Mass and officiate at 2 scheduled weddings.

He was arrested in a Milan apartment while flushing cocaine down the toilet and tearing up his passport, purportedly to avoid identification. *Source: The Independent, 7-18-14*

Gerig M. Huggins, 50, Mt. Pleasant, **SC**: Ill treatment of a child. Huggins, a former Assemblies of God pastor (now without a congregation), is accused by a man who alleges Huggins molested him starting when he was 14. He's currently chaplain at the Medical University of SC. *Source: Post & Courier, 7-16-14*

Pedro L. Custodio, 44, Eustis, **FL**: Attempted sexual battery and 2 counts of attempted sexual battery. Custodio is accused of assaulting 3 women at Our Father's House of Refuge Ministries Inc., a homeless shelter he founded in 2010.

One victim alleged she was raped on her birthday, then stayed in a consensual relationship for more than a year. Another alleged victim said she felt pressured to have sex. "Pastor Pete would tell her she could always go find another shelter in Orlando if she did not do what he wanted to do," a complaint said. *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 7-16-14*

Kwame Wura Bempah, Dome, **Ghana**: Visa fraud. Bempah, head pastor of Christian Faith Vineyard, allegedly defrauded 6 persons under the pretext of getting jobs for them in the U.S. Two alleged accomplices were still at-large.

The alleged victims paid him \$94,246, according to police, and were told to get ready to leave Ghana on June 13. But when that day came, Bempah failed to answer phone calls and went into hiding. *Source: Ghana Web, 7-15-14*

Jose A. Siliezar-Sevilla, 48, Benson, **NC**: Making false statements. Siliezar-Sevilla, the native Honduran pastor of Iglesia Internacional El Verbo en Accion, is accused of lying on a 2010 work visa application about a 1994 conviction for possession of a controlled substance in Los Angeles.

His family said bad legal advice led to the omission. *Source: WNCN/TWC News, 7-14-14*

Duane E. Youngblood, 47, Homestead, **PA**: Corrupting a minor. Youngblood, pastor of Higher Call World Outreach Church, is accused of molesting a boy, now 21, for about 30 months, ending in 2011, during counseling at church.

The pastor was convicted in 2008 of molesting a 15-year-old boy during counseling in 2006. His 2006 book "Freedom From Homosexuality: No Longer Living The Lie," detailed what he said was "the enemy's plan against him." *Source: KDKA, 7-13-14*

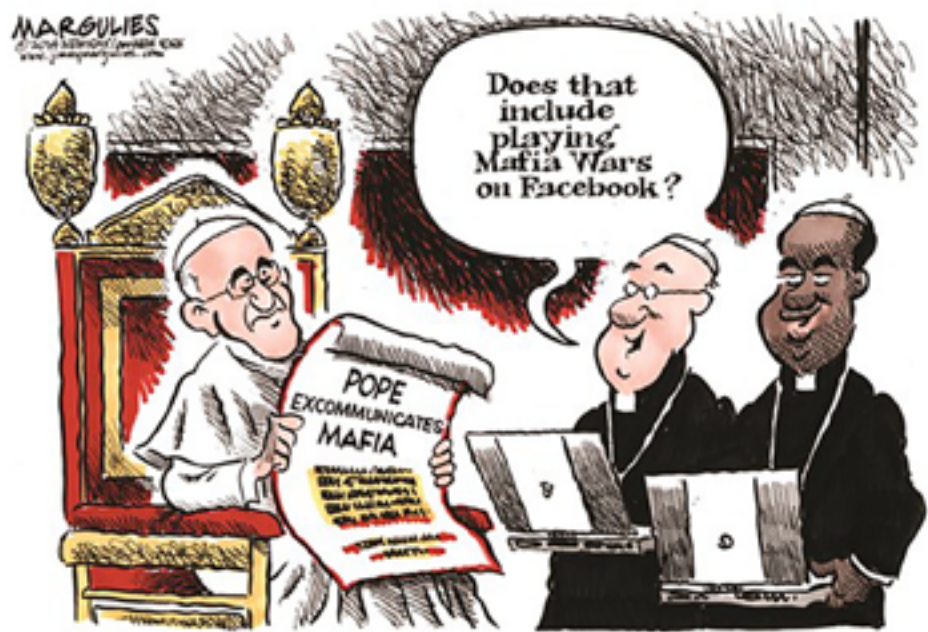
Jay Strickland, 50, Morris, **AL**: 1st-degree sodomy and 2 counts of sexual abuse. Strickland, an administrative pastor at Sharon Heights Baptist Church and a nurse anesthetist at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, is charged with molesting a male victim, now an adult, as a child in another state.

During the investigation, police learned of another alleged victim, a female who reported being abused a child. *Source: al.com, 7-8-14*

Wayne Makela, 27, Hobart, **WI**: 2nd-degree sexual assault of a child, child enticement, use of a computer to facilitate a child sex crime, exposing a child to harmful materials of harmful descriptions or narrations and sexual assault by a school staff person or a person who works or volunteers with children. Makela was a youth director, basketball coach and computer teacher at Pilgrim Lutheran Church and School in Green Bay. He was arrested after a 13-year-old student's mother allegedly found sexual text messages on her son's phone, a criminal complaint said.

Makela has a young child. *Source: Press Gazette, 7-4-14*

Mack A. Davis, 73, Athens, **AL**: 1st-degree sodomy, attempted sodomy, 2 counts of 1st-degree sexual abuse and 10 counts of 2nd-degree sexual abuse of a minor between the ages of 12 and 16. All counts stem from alleged sexual contact between Davis and 2 boys in the late 1970s and 1980s when he was minister of youth and recreation and director of summer camp for Lakeside Baptist Church in Birmingham. One alleged victim was his 9-year-old nephew.



The nephew, Andrew Guffey, now 44, alleges the abuse continued till he was 17. He said he blames Mike McLemore, Lakeside Baptist pastor from 1983-2007, for not stopping it. "He's a bigger creep to me than Mack," Guffey said. "He was more worried about the church's image than doing what's right. He should not be in his position where he is."

McLemore was president of the Alabama Baptist Convention from 2000-02 and has been executive director of the Birmingham Baptist Association since 2007.

Davis' wife Jimmie divorced him after becoming aware of accusations in 1997. She told a newspaper she suspects he molested dozens of boys. *Source: al.com, 7-1-14*

Matthew Williams, 28, Collierville, **TN**: 8 counts of raping a child. Williams was piano and voice teacher at Hope Presbyterian Church's Music Academy in Cordova and former assistant music director at Maples United Methodist Church in Olive Branch, MS. He was also a case worker at the YMCA.

Williams' father Carl told a reporter it was painful to turn his son in to police. The alleged abuse involved a family member. *Source: Fox 13, 7-1-14*

Glen McCoy, 30, Statesville, **NC**: Aggravated statutory rape and especially aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor. McCoy was arrested in Tennessee, where he'd reportedly moved after resigning as co-pastor at Life Center Church and as an elder at Miracle Tabernacle of Deliverance Church. He also drove bus and worked as a teacher's aide for a public school district.

McCoy allegedly met the 17-year-old male victim online. Detective Robert Carrigan III said in a warrant he found several photos of the teen and McCoy having sex. *Source: WBTV, 7-1-14*

Kathryn Ronk, 29, Birmingham, **MI**: 8 counts of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct, possession of child sexually abusive material and furnishing alcohol to a minor. Ronk, a Spanish teacher at Bishop Foley Catholic High School, is charged with having sex with a 15-year-old male student in the school and at his home. She is married with no children. *Source: Detroit Free Press, 6-30-14*

Max Davis, 68, Campbell, **Australia**: 3 counts of indecent treatment of a child under 14. Bishop Davis, head of the Catholic Military Ordinariate, is accused of molesting a 13-year-old boy in 1969 when he taught at St. Benedict's College in New Norcia before he was ordained. *Source: The Telegraph, 6-30-14*

Guillermo Gil Torres, San Luis Potosi, **Mexico**: Suspicion of sexually abusing a minor. Gil Torres, pastor of Santa Rosa de Lima Catholic Parish, was arrested based on a complaint from a boy's grandmother. The boy alleged the priest fondled him while showing him photos of his travels.

The grandmother told police the boy had become noticeably sad and nervous and asked never to be taken to church. *Source: AP, 6-29-14*

John Hays, 57, River Forest, **IL**: Aggravated criminal sexual abuse. Hays, director of congregation life for First Presbyterian Church, is accusing of molesting a boy from 2003 through 2009, starting when he was 8. Police believe there may be another victim. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 6-27-14*

Michael G. Sperou, 64, Clackamas, **OR**: 3 counts of 1st-degree unlawful sexual penetration. Sperou was senior pastor at Southeast Bible Church (now North Clackamas Bible Community Church) when the incidents with minor females were alleged in 1997. Detectives think there may be more victims. *Source: KATU, 6-27-14*

Sergio Librizzi, Trapani, **Sicily**: Sexual assault, embezzlement, extortion and attempted extortion. Librizzi, a parish priest and director of the Catholic charity Caritas in the Sicilian city of Trapani, is accused of demanding sex from immigrants seeking residency visas.

Librizzi is accused of at least 10 episodes of sexual violence since 2009. The alleged theft amount is estimated at \$13,600. *Source: Religion News Service, 6-25-14*

John Balyo, 35, Caledonia, **MI**: 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct. Balyo, morning show host at WCSG [Christian] Radio, owned by Cornerstone University, is charged with paying a man to arrange sex with an 11-year-old boy in May. Police found a "bondage" kit with handcuffs, chains, padlock, duct tape and rubber gloves in his storage unit, along with children's socks, an affidavit said.

Balyo was arrested at a Christian music festival. Police later found articles about missing children and copies of children's obituaries. He was fired as a Kent County sheriff's reserve volunteer after the arrest. *Source: mlive.com, 6-25-14*

Roy N. Yoakem, 46, Bowling Green, **KY**: Unlawful use of electronic means to induce a minor to engage in sexual or other prohibited activities, 3rd-degree rape and 3rd-degree sodomy. He's additionally charged in Tennessee with aggravated statutory rape, statutory rape by an authority figure and sexual battery by an authority figure.

Yoakem, pastor at New Gospel Outreach Church, is accused of having sex with a boy, 14, whose mother found "intimate" text messages on his phone.

"He's a predator and he doesn't need to be on the street. I'm glad we got him," said Allen County Sheriff's Detective Chad Keen. Yoakem is on the sex offender registry due to a 2003 conviction for molesting an 8-year-old. *Source: Park City Daily News, 6-25-14*

Michael W. Light, 34, Mt. Juliet, **TN**: 3 counts of statutory rape and 8 counts of statutory sexual offense. Light was a youth pastor at Straightway Baptist Church in Elon, **NC**, when the alleged incidents with a female church member aged 13-15 occurred in 2005-07.

He's now a student pastor at Global Vision in Mt. Juliet. *Source: WGHP, 6-23-14*

John Oselsky, 50, Carmichael, **CA**: Soliciting prostitution. Oselsky, senior pastor at Grace Family Baptist Church, was among 24 people arrested in a police sting. He denied the charge and claimed that as a native Moldovan, he didn't understand what the 2 women were even saying. *Source: KCRA, 6-12-14*

Ivo Poppe, 57, Menin, **Belgium**: Suspicion of causing the deaths of at least 40 patients at Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur, where he was a nurse and part-time Catholic pastoral assistant from 1980 to 2011. He was ordained as a deacon in 2002.

Although euthanasia is legal in Belgium, authorities said they have seen no evidence that patients gave Poppe their consent. They died from smothering with a pillow or insulin overdose. *Source: ucanews.com, 6-9-14*

Pleaded / Convicted

Ray S. Teets, 67, South Union, **PA**: Pleaded no contest to indecent assault, corruption of minors, unlawful contact with a minor and attempted indecent assault. Teets, pastor of Fallen Timbers Community Chapel, is accused of crimes against an 11-year-old girl who attended his church. Security camera footage showed him taking her into a woodshed.

Charges involving 3 other alleged female

victims between the ages of 5 and 8 have also been filed, including an allegation from 1999 at the church. He pleaded guilty in 1988 to sexually assaulting a 15-year-old Maryland girl who was his physical therapy patient. The girl's father wants Teets to get more than the 3 to 6 years the plea deal calls for. "I hope they send him to one of Pennsylvania's finest prisons, not a lightweight prison, but somewhere where somebody who has a daughter or two can take care of Mr. Teets," he said. *Source: Tribune-Review, 6-8-14*

Lonny L. Remmers, 56, Corona, **CA**: Pleaded guilty to inflicting corporal injury on a child and assault with a deadly weapon. Remmers, pastor of Heart of Worship Community Church, admitted to brutally disciplining a 13-year-old boy whose mother brought him to the church's group home. Church members **Darryl D. Jeter**, 30, and **Nicholas J. Craig**, 24, also pleaded guilty to similar charges.

The boy was pepper-sprayed, pinched with pliers, struck with a shovel, threatened with death and forced to dig a mock grave. *Source: AP, 6-7-14*

Arthur "A.B." Schirmer, 66, Waynesburg, **PA**: Pleaded no contest to 3rd-degree murder in the 1999 death of his first wife. Schirmer, a Methodist minister, is already serving a life sentence for killing his second wife in 2008. *Source: Lebanon Daily News, 6-30-14*

Hector C. Gonzalez, 46, Davis, **CA**: Pleaded guilty to statutory rape. As part of a plea agreement, if approved by the judge, Gonzalez will serve 90 days in jail and 3 years' probation for having sex with a 16-year-old girl in the rectory of St. James' Catholic Parish, where he was pastor.

"Fr. Gonzalez's behavior with the minor was a crime and a sin," Kevin Eckery, a Diocese of Sacramento spokesman said, adding that the diocese will ask the Holy See to defrock him. He was initially charged with 3 counts of unlawful sexual intercourse. *Source: Sacramento Bee, 6-28-14*

Tadhg O'Dalaigh, 70, Dublin, **Ireland**: Found guilty of indecent assault of a 16-year-old boy in 1979 at a Catholic boarding school in County Cork, where O'Dalaigh taught as a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

O'Dalaigh, now retired, denied masturbating the victim while he was a patient in the school infirmary, but has admitted he molested 10 others in a similar manner and pleaded guilty several days before his trial to 5 counts of indecent assault on another boy. *Source: Irish Times, 6-26-14*

Sentenced

Jason Roberson, 35, Boulder, **CO**: 2 years in prison followed by 30 days in jail and 10 years' intensive sex-offender probation. Roberson, youth pastor at VineLife Church, was convicted for a 7-year relationship he started with a 15-year-old congregant.

Roberson pleaded guilty in April to sexually exploiting and stalking Danielle DesGeorges, now 24.

In a presentence report, a probation officer wrote that Roberson "continues to minimize his accountability."

"He had access to our daughter because he had established a circle of trust within our lives," said Janet DesGeorges, her mother. "He groomed, manipulated and abused our daughter."

Danielle DesGeorges also is suing Roberson and VineLife Church in Boulder District Court. Church officials were issued summonses for failing to report alleged sexual abuse of a child: senior pastor **Walt Roberson**, who is Jason Roberson's father; executive pastor **Robert P. Young**; pastor **Luke M. Humbrecht**; and church elders **Edward C. Bennell** and **Warren L. Williams**.

Humbrecht pleaded guilty and was given a 12-month deferred sentence. The others are set to stand trial in November. *Source: Daily Camera, 7-20-14*

Robert Lyzenga, 58, Lafayette, **IN**: 4 years in prison followed by 3 years' probation after pleading guilty to surreptitiously recording 5 women and 5 girls as young as age 5 on cameras disguised as air fresheners inside a women's restroom at Sunrise Christian Reformed Church, where he was pastor in 2011-12.

Video of a 16-year-old girl had been edited to include "slow-motion replays showing her exposed pubic area," a charging document said. *Source: Indianapolis Star, 7-19-14*

Jerrold W. Ketner, 80, Dodge City, **KS**: 3 years' probation and no contact with the victim and her husband on a conviction for sexual battery. Ketner, pastor of New Hope Compassion Ministries, was arrested after an employee who is an undocumented immigrant alleged he assaulted her for several months and threatened to have her sent back to Mexico. *Source:*

‘[Pastor Roberson] had access to our daughter because he had established a circle of trust within our lives.’ — Janet DesGeorges, victim’s mother to pedophile priest Frank Klep

KWCH, 7-16-14

Archie L. Evans, Conway, **SC**: 84 months in prison and restitution of \$3.7 million to victims in his Ponzi scheme, many of whom were members of Tilly Swamp Baptist Church, where he was pastor. He pleaded guilty to mail fraud and structuring financial transactions to evade reporting requirements.

Prosecutor Bill Day said Evans took a gun into the courthouse but security confiscated it. He may face charges for having a firearm in a federal courthouse. *Source: WBTW, 7-9-14*

Jeremy Grinnell, 42, Rockford, **MI**: 5 years’ probation and 80 hours on a work crew after pleading guilty to surveilling unclothed persons. Grinnell, pastor at Bella Vista Church and a Cornerstone University theology instructor, was caught two nights in a row on a ladder watching a couple have sex at a 37-year-old woman’s home. She’s his former church assistant.

Grinnell claimed he’d gone there on a “prayer walk” to help stave off foreclosure on her home. Kyle Baker, the fiancé, said after hearing Grinnell minimize his actions, he’d have liked him to get jail time. *Source: Grand Rapids, Press, 6-25-14*

Bishop Markel of the Moldovan Orthodox Church was ordered to pay \$710 to an LGBT group, \$850 in court costs and to publicly apologize for anti-gay comments in 2012.

Markel called for barring LGBT community members from working in schools, catering services and medical institutions, claiming “92% of them are AIDS-HIV patients.” *Source: Radio Free Europe, 6-11-14*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

Dawn Corvino of Brick, **NJ**, and her 2 children are suing the Catholic **Diocese of Trenton**, the **Church of the Visitation** in Brick and **Fr. Marukudiyil Velan**, alleging that Velan, a native of India, molested each of them in 2012 and that his superiors failed to supervise him adequately.

Velan also faces charges of criminal sexual contact, sexual assault and endangering the welfare of a child, The children were 5 and 13 at the time of the alleged incidents. *Source: Asbury Park Press, 7-4-14*

An unidentified plaintiff is suing several **Chicago area Seventh-Day Adventist entities** for allegedly failing to protect him in 2001 from a **pastor from Uruguay** who molested minors. The suit says the church transferred the pastor to the area in 2000 despite knowledge of previous complaints.

Allegations include “inappropriate touching, fondling of the genitals, oral sex and other indecent acts.” The church has 17 million members in 204 countries, its website says. *Source: Southtown Star, 7-2-14*

A 75-year-old Minnesotan is suing the Catholic **Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis**, claiming a now-deceased priest, Alphonsus Ferguson, molested him for about 3 years in the 1950s as an altar boy at Guardian Angels Church in Hastings.

Ferguson died in the 1970s. The parish was eventually home to at least 5 other priests accused of sexual improprieties. Ferguson’s name was not on the archdiocese’s 2013-14 list of credibly accused clergy.

“I told my wife, this guy is going to get away with it if I don’t come forward,” the plaintiff said. “I thought for sure that he would be on the list.” *Source: KARE, 7-2-14*

A young woman in Bronx, **NY**, is suing the Catholic **Archdiocese of New York** for negligence for allegedly failing to supervise **Jaime Duenas**, a now-deceased priest who was arrested in 2011 and pleaded guilty to molesting her when she was 16. Duenas told authorities the victim was to blame because “she wore short skirts.”

“While we cannot comment on the lawsuit itself, we do recognize the seriousness of Father Duenas’ wrongdoing,” said archdiocese spokesman Joseph Swilling. *Source: NY Post, 6-29-14*

Malka Leifer, former principal of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish school in Melbourne, **Australia**, is being sued, as is the **Adass Israel Girls’ School**, by 2 former students allegedly molested by Leifer, who fled to Israel in 2008.

Parents alleged in 2008 that Leifer, a mother of 8, had shared her bed with several students

when her husband, a rabbi, was away.

A resident said Leifer often took children home for after-school tutoring and to study the Torah. One girl told a psychologist she was too embarrassed to tell her parents she was molested, a newspaper reported. *Source: The Age, 6-28-14*

The family of a girl allegedly molested at age 10 in 2009 by a member of First Baptist Church in Bemis, **MS**, is suing the church for letting **Chad Luttrell** serve as a vacation bible school volunteer. The suit says Lutrell, 35, had been seen in the church kissing girls ages 6 to 10 on the mouth.

He was convicted in 2010 of sexual battery in the incident involving the 10-year-old.

The suit also claims former pastor **Mark McSwain** knew Lutrell had been accused of previous sexual misconduct. He was charged in 2013 with stalking 3 adult church women, all Walmart employees. *Source: Jackson Sun, 5-22-14*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

Quebec Superior Court Judge Claude Bouchard ordered the **Redemptorist Order** of Catholic priests, the **Seminaire St-Alphonse** and **Fr. Raymond-Marie Lavoie** to pay at least \$75,000 to each of 70 claimants who were victims of sexual assault.

Lavoie pleaded guilty in 2011 to molesting 13 children and is serving 5 years. At the civil trial, 12 men testified about being molested regularly as youths.

Main plaintiff Frank Tremblay filed the suit in 2010. It names 9 priests, 6 of whom are dead. Tremblay was awarded the maximum amount of \$150,000. *Source: Canadian Press, 7-10-14*

The Catholic **Archdiocese of St. Louis** announced settlement of a lawsuit brought by plaintiff Jane Doe 92, who claimed she was molested by **Joseph Ross**, a priest removed from the ministry in 2002. In 1988 Ross pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor stemming from inappropriate touching of a boy.

The archdiocese said Ross is a known abuser but denies he ever molested Doe. Settlement terms weren’t disclosed. *Source: Religion Clause, 7-10-14*

The Catholic **Archdiocese of Seattle** has agreed to pay \$12.1 million to 30 men who say they were sexually abused as students decades ago at schools in Kent and Seattle operated by the **Christian Brothers**. The order filed for bankruptcy in 2011.

Plaintiffs’ attorney Mike Pfau said his clients range in age from 42 to 68, with the abuse occurring from the early 1950s to 1984.

Many say they were abused by teacher **Edward Courtney**, who had been removed from 4 schools across the U.S. for molesting boys before coming to O’Dea High School in 1974.

Teacher **G.A. Kealy**, commonly known as “Feely Kealy,” also had a long history of molesting boys, the suit alleged. *Source: Seattle Times, 6-24-14*

Legal Developments

The 2012 sexual exploitation conviction of **Patrick Edouard**, 44, Pella, **IA**, was affirmed by the Iowa Supreme Court, overturning the state Court of Appeals, which had ordered a new trial.

Edouard, pastor of Covenant Reformed Church, was charged with pursuing intimate relationships with several women who came to him for counseling and was sentenced to 5 years. He has been out on bond pending appeals. *Source: Des Moines Register, 7-18-14*

James Dokos, a Glenview, **IL**, Greek Orthodox priest charged in **Milwaukee** with felony theft for allegedly stealing over \$100,000 from a trust fund set up to benefit Annunciation Church, has twice failed to show up for court appearances. The first no-show was blamed on car trouble.

Dokos’ lawyer said he couldn’t disclose Dokos’ medical emergency but confirmed he was admitted to the hospital. Court Commissioner Barry Phillips ordered Dokos to appear in 2 days unless he was still hospitalized. He did show up and was released on personal recognizance bond. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 7-14-14*

Robert Genevicz, 67, Stratford, **CT**, pastor for the last 16 years at Stratford Baptist Church, said in a signed confession to police that he was involved in a relationship for most of that time with a woman with a long criminal record.

Genevicz, 67, was charged in March with stealing \$173,000 from a 71-year-old retired teacher and congregation member for whom he was estate conservator.

“[O]ne must ask how could a pastor be so naïve and gullible to keep getting suckered into her schemes?” Genevicz wrote. *Source: CT Post, 7-13-14*

Gerald Robinson, 76, a Catholic priest convicted of killing an **Ohio** nun in 1980, died of a heart condition in prison hospice the day after a federal judge denied his motion for “compassionate release” to die at his brother’s home in Toledo.

Sr. Margaret Ann Pahl, 71, was strangled and stabbed 31 times on Holy Saturday in the chapel of the hospital where Robinson, then 41,

was chaplain. He wasn’t arrested until 2004 and never admitted guilt.

Fr. Charles Ritter of the Toledo Diocese said Robinson was eligible for a church funeral because he was still ordained. “Whether in the eyes of God, Fr. Robinson was or was not guilty of the crime, I do not know,” Ritter said. “I do know that he is the work of God’s hands, as are we all. He was a sinner, as are we all.” *Source: AP/Toledo Blade, 7-3-14*

An arbitrator ordered the Catholic **Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph** to pay \$1.1 million for violating terms of a 2008 settlement of \$10 million to 47 clergy abuse victims.

The \$1.1 million will go to 44 plaintiffs in a 2011 suit alleging that the diocese and **Bishop Robert Finn** violated parts of the settlement by failing to institute reforms to keep children safe. The order said the diocese has breached 5 settlement terms. *Source: Kansas City Star, 7-1-14*

The **Tennessee** Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from former Catholic priest **William Casey**, sentenced to 35 years in 2011 for raping an altar boy. Warren Tucker said Casey molested him for 5 years, starting in 1975 when he was in 5th grade in Kingsport.

Casey’s attorney argued that the victim waited too long to report the crime. *Source: Times-News, 6-26-14*

A Missouri religious group whose member died in a botched home birth in 2006 must pay \$108.6 million to her parents, a state appeals court ruled in upholding the trial court’s verdict.

Misty Horner died 5 weeks after she went into labor. The fetus was stillborn, but she was denied medical attention due to the faith healing practices of her husband, his brother who led the group and her sister-in-law.

Instead of calling 9-1-1 during the difficult breech birth, Misty’s husband used a pair of unsterilized household scissors to do an episiotomy. He told an emergency crew that came 9 hours later that his religious beliefs wouldn’t let another man see his wife’s vagina.

She eventually died of an infection. According to trial testimony from the ex-wife of Misty’s father-in-law, he was involved in 4 other fatal home births. *Source: Courthouse News, 6-18-14*

Defrocked **Minnesota** Catholic priest **Thomas Adamson** testified in a deposition that he abused at least 10 boys as he moved from parish to parish from the 1960s to 1980s. He said he admitted the abuse to the bishop of the Winona Diocese as early as 1964, but no action was taken and he transferred to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in 1975.

Asked how many boys he molested after 1975, Adamson responded, “I don’t know. I’d have to study that out.”

He’s accused of abusing at least 37 children in his 25 years in active ministry, which ended in 1985. He was laicized in 2009.

“Did you at that time . . . realize, look, I’m a priest, I’m an adult, this is a kid, this is a crime?” asked plaintiffs’ attorney Jeff Anderson.

“Never,” answered Adamson. “I looked at it more as a sin than . . . a crime.” *Source: Star Tribune, 6-11-14*

Australia canceled the visa of British Catholic **Bishop Richard Williamson**, stopping him from a speaking appearance. Williamson is a Holocaust denier who once called Jews “enemies of Christ.” He was expelled in 2012 from the very conservative Society of Saint Pius X. *Source: JTA, 6-11-14*

The **Order of St. Benedict** finally dropped its objection to Bill Wolfe telling how he was molested in 1984 by **Fr. Timothy Brennan** at an all-boy school run by the order in Morristown, **NJ**. Wolfe, now 44, went to Brennan for counseling when he was 14.

Wolfe said Brennan started talking about sex and over time gradually introduced him to pornography. “The natural, biological reaction would happen,” Wolfe said. “I did masturbate for him. It occurred to me that something was going on under his robe, as well.”

He never went back for counseling after that.

Wolfe settled his civil suit in 1988 for 7 figures and agreed to stay anonymous. Brennan pleaded guilty to a criminal charge and received probation. Wolfe sued in 2012 to get the confidentiality agreement removed. *Source: PIX11, 6-10-14*

Investigators determined that a June fire that gutted the waterfront mansion in Indian Head, **MD**, of **Robert “Dr. Shine” Freeman**, former pastor of Save the Seed Ministry, was arson. The home was abandoned in 2012 after Freeman pleaded guilty to obstructing bankruptcy court proceedings and was sentenced to 27 months in prison.

Freeman, who called himself “God’s Top Gun of Deliverance,” used church funds to buy the property for \$1.75 million, along with a fleet of luxury cars valued at more than \$1 million. He hid those assets when filing for bankruptcy in 2005. *Source: somdnews, 6-10-14*

Allegations

The Presbyterian Church USA announced it considers child sex abuse allegations made in 2012 against former **St. Louis** pastor **Michael W. Jackson** credible. The alleged abuse took

place in the mid-1980s. Jackson is no longer a minister and is thought to be living in Georgia. *Source: KMOX, 7-1-14*

Removed / Resigned

Joseph Gallatin resigned as pastor of a Catholic parish in Mendota, **MN**, after a review board recommended restricting his ministry for inappropriate touching of a 17-year-old boy in 1998 on a mission trip to W. Virginia.

In an affidavit submitted in a lawsuit, Jennifer Haselberger, former chancellor of the **Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis**, said she repeatedly raised concerns that Gallatin had admitted attraction to boys as young as 12.

Her sworn statement alleges the archdiocese covered up warnings about about 40 priests over a 5-year period. *Source: Charleston Gazette, 7-16-14*

An **unidentified imam** at an **Ankara** mosque was suspended by the Religious Affairs Directorate for an alleged Ponzi scheme through which he stole 7 million Turkish lira (\$3.29 million).

The imam allegedly collected millions by promising to distribute a future “share of the profit” but never followed through, mosque members said. *Source: Hürriyet Daily News, 7-3-14*

Howard Fitzgerald, pastor of 2 **Iowa** Catholic parishes, can no longer function publicly as a priest and has been asked to stop wearing clerical garb, a release from the Diocese of Des Moines said. Bishop Richard Pates has apologized to the victim, who asked to remain anonymous.

Fitzgerald was put on indefinite leave after a decades-old allegation of child sexual abuse was deemed credible. *Source: Des Moines Register, 7-1-14*

Michael Heras resigned as pastor of St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Catholic Parish in Corpus Christi, **TX**. Msgr. Heras was put on leave due to alleged inappropriate conduct decades ago. *Source: KZTV, 6-29-14*

Josef Wesolowski, 66, former **Dominican Republic** apostolic nuncio, has been defrocked in the initial stage of a canonical trial.

He also will be tried by a Vatican City criminal tribunal. A 13-year-old shoeshine boy alleged Wesolowski had him masturbate and recorded it. *Source: Vatican Information Service, 6-27-14*

The duties of **George Seufferling**, a Catholic priest who retired in 2001, are now limited by the Archdiocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph to performing weddings and funerals for family members. The diocese said it received what it called 2 credible allegations of inappropriate conduct by Seufferling that didn’t involve minors. *Source: Kansas City Star, 6-24-14*

The **Archdiocese of Tijuana, Mexico**, suspended 7 priests over allegations of sexual abuse, including American **Jeffrey Newell**, a defendant in a civil suit who served previously in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

“Fr. Newell should have never been given a church job in Mexico,” the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests said in a statement. *Source: Catholic News Service, 6-24-14*

Other

Daniel Corogeanu, 33, a Romanian priest who was imprisoned in 2005 for killing a 23-year-old nun in a botched exorcism, was chased out of his village and forced to live in a remote forest hut.

Corogeanu, aided by 4 other nuns, left Sr. Irina Cornici bound, gagged and strapped to a cross and without food or water for 5 days at an isolated monastery. He served 7 years in prison. He was chased off by villagers who’d come to the site of his proposed memorial to Cornici in Zapodeni.

Amid allegations the court wrongly downplayed the finding that the nun died from an adrenaline overdose given by paramedics, it also emerged that she was a diagnosed schizophrenic whose “possessions” were due to a series of schizophrenic episodes. *Source: Daily Mail, 7-16-14*

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

When a woman has a husband who acts in a certain way, it is easy for her to feel angry and resentful towards him. But once she understands why he acts that way — and that almost all men act that way — she no longer feels badly towards him.

Pastor Mark Gungor, Green Bay, Wis., on his “Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage” seminar he’ll present at the Cannes Film Festival

Christian Post, 5-19-14

Letterbox

Blame Hobby Lobby ruling on drugs?

I wish we could state for a fact that the Hobby Lobby decision handed down June 30 by the Supreme Court was the result of an alcohol-fueled “boys night out” weekend in Vegas. But since we can’t, I’m going to blame peyote.

Not that the justices of the majority ingested it (although they surely did digest some outlandish arguments), but American Indians did, and do. Protecting Native American ritual venues and practices was the moving force behind the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, which the actors in the Hobby Lobby case relied on.

When the act was amended the next year, it specifically mentioned peyote, allowing its production, transportation and use in religious rites on “sacred” ground.

So the Hobby Lobby case was one of the blowback effects of Congress wanting to make sure that Indians had plenty of peyote for their ceremonies.

That, however, is not nearly so ridiculous as Justice Alito’s main building block for his decision: Hobby Lobby (the Green family), a corporation as person, held a “sincere religious belief” that “life begins at conception.”

This is shooting from the hip at its worst. “Life begins at conception” is not even a religious belief, let alone a “sincere” (what would the alternatives be?) religious belief. It’s a pseudo-scientific opinion, the only basis for which is a literal reading of metaphorical language in the Hebrew texts of Jeremiah and Psalms (not science books last time I checked), amidst a backdrop of politics and Catholic autocratic rule.

You know what? Things could get way out of line if this keeps up. Imagine the possibilities.

Jack W. Mathys
Texas

Religious freedom sure, but for whom?

After the Supreme Court decision in the Hobby Lobby case, House Speaker John Boehner and the majority party clearly revealed what they mean by religious freedom: the freedom to control others, supported by imaginary divine justification.

Jorg Aadahl
California

...

In a news report about the Hobby Lobby case, an attorney said the decision was based on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the court’s understanding of our (constitutional) “First Freedom.” Presumably, that refers to freedom of religion, but as FFRF points out, you can’t have that without freedom from religion, which is the real “First Freedom.”

The first two clauses of the First Amendment are historically referred to as the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . .” It is the former that gives us our constitutional right to a government free from religion. That right literally is the “First Freedom” given to us by the Bill of Rights.

Our freedom from religion comes first, not the free exercise of religion.

It’s not an afterthought. It’s at the top of the list.

Our real “First Freedom” is freedom from religion. We should recycle this term, clarify its meaning and use it ourselves. I think it’s the real “foundation” of FFRF.

Chris Allen, After-Life Member
Texas

Hobby Lobby catalyst for new Lifers

My wife and I had known for months that we would become Lifetime Members. We were waiting, though, for an important political event that we could connect with our membership. The recent Hobby Lobby case was custom-made as this catalyst.

We also wish to express our abiding gratitude for the work that FFRF does, year after year. The separation of church and state is such an important task, and you have been a model of effectiveness and perseverance.

George Savage and Donna Silver
Wisconsin

...

I’m so proud to be an FFRF member. Now I’m in the happy position of becoming a Life Member. My husband and I attended the regional convention in Raleigh and noticed the selling of raffle tickets for “clean” money as a fundraiser, so we have enclosed two “clean” bills for this purpose.

We had a great time in Raleigh and met so many wonderful and comedic people (we didn’t expect to laugh so much). All the speakers were excellent, entertaining and enlightening. It was so uplifting to be around such amazing, brave people. I hope you come back soon. We plan to attend some national conventions in the coming years.

Diane Oxley
North Carolina

...

I have no great story of conversion or escape from mind-enslaving religion. There is no shackling from which I wrenched myself loose and no great discipline to put me on the correct path.

My parents came to the U.S. at the turn of the century (my father to avoid conscription in the Austro-Hungarian military) with great antipathy toward clericalism. I was born 9-21-21 and was free to fend on my own as far as religion went, and so I did.

Being moderately myopic, I read a lot and soon realized all the stories and fables of how it all began were just that, whether they were American Indian, Eskimo, Norse, Czech or Russian stories.

After having been an FFRF member for many years, I thought it was time for me to send in a donation for Life Membership. Enclosed is my “grand.” I admire all the efforts this organization makes in rectifying the stupendous ignorance still abroad in this country.

Ludwig R. Koukal
Arizona

Still ‘messing ’em up’ at age 92

I so enjoyed your June/July issue, especially the article “FFRF attorneys join secular educational effort in D.C.” To show some appreciation I’m sending a donation.



Trunk stuck behind truck

California member Steve Trunk writes: “Most of the time this rig is parked on an overpass serving as a mobile billboard for Jesus. This is the second time I’ve encountered this jerk on the freeway; he always drives well below the speed limit. I guess so everyone has time to get the ‘message.’ ”

One reason I’m doing this is because I’m 92 already and very pleased with most of my decisions to splurge on a few extras.

How much longer do I have? Hence, I’m enjoying every day especially when I can “mess ’em up” some.

P.S. Coulson
Texas

Clergy ‘most criminal’ of all careers?

I am always astonished at the Black Collar Crime blotter. I would imagine that if you compiled statistics of the crimes committed by any other professional category — say, dentists, bricklayers, nurses, truck drivers, college profs — that clergy would emerge as the most “criminal” of all professions. I’m not talking traffic violations or shoplifting; I’m talking jail-time crimes!

See you at The Biltmore in Los Angeles in October.

Alexander Wallace
California

Atheists place burden where it belongs

I disagree very strongly with Bart Ehrman’s statement [June/July14] that “Agnosticism has to do with epistemology — what you know. Atheism has to do with belief — what you believe.”

The question of whether or not gods exist is not a question of what you know; it’s a question of what can be *proved* by the person who *claims* to know that “gods” exist. There is no such thing as a burden of disproof (finding negative evidence) to be foisted onto the skeptic, and yet the agnostic accepts such a burden when considering the claims that people have made about the existence of gods (“Can I disprove his claim?”).

The atheist’s skepticism properly places the burden of proof (finding positive evidence) onto the person who claims to know that gods exist (“Can he prove his claim?”).

Anyone who expects the skeptic to disprove any wild claim that someone makes is being unreasonable. The person who makes a claim should be prepared to either present credible, objective evidence to back his claim or have his claim dismissed without “disproof.”

Lee Helms
Michigan

Crank mail reveals Christian bigotry

After reading the vile language used in the crank mail, which includes threatening to shoot people who do not agree with them, I wonder how they could consider themselves Christian. I find it amusing that they accuse us of pushing an agenda on them when they are doing just that to us. Recent laws passed in the various states and Supreme Court decisions further the religious agenda.

They speak of their freedom of religion and speech while denying those who disagree with them those same rights. Those who say they served in the military to preserve our freedoms should realize that it was for all our freedoms, including those who disagree with you. I have the freedom to choose any religion or no religion at all as I do.

The letters in crank mail do not surprise me, as it is just what I expect from Christians, the most intolerant people on Earth.

Rich Greene
North Carolina

Pope maligns lepers with interview comment

In a recent interview, Pope Francis condemned child sex abuse as a “leprosy” in the church.

Pope, I’m glad you’re facing the pedophile problem, but do you have to dump on leprosy (Hansen’s disease), which is already misunderstood and unfairly maligned enough?

Joan Reisman-Brill
New York

Secular table ‘grace’ has positive aspects

In recent issues there was a discussion concerning how to react or respond when you are a guest at someone’s table, usually a friend or family member who is a believer, and you are asked to say “grace.” Here is a “secular grace” I found a while back. I’ve used it a few times.

It will usually provoke some response from others at the table, often neutral or positive like “that’s different” or “that’s nice, where did you get that?” and sometimes vaguely negative such as “that’s not grace.” In any case, it serves the purpose of expressing my sentiments of thankfulness for the food and being together with people



Bad career advice

Anthony Rosaci forwards this head-scratcher taken from inside a vehicle passing through Ashford, Conn.

that I (hopefully) have something (my nonbelief) in common with. And on occasion it opens up dinner table conversation about religion during which it is always interesting to discover that some at the table are less religious than I may have thought!

“As we partake of this food in each other’s company, what was once separate from all of us becomes a part of each of us. May we also remember what we have in common and what brings us all together. Let this sharing of food foster peace and understanding among us. May it also remind us that as we reach out to others to brighten their lives, so are our lives brightened in turn.”

Steve Brecker
Virginia

Come on IRS, time to do your job!

I recently read about the Mormon woman who was excommunicated because she was pushing to get women into official positions in the Mormon church. It got me to thinking.

Years ago the Mormon church had to allow blacks into the priesthood to keep its tax-free status. The IRS recognized that keeping blacks out of the priesthood was discriminatory. Why isn’t the practice of keeping women out of the priesthood (think Mormons and Catholics, just to name two) also considered discriminatory? Why doesn’t the IRS threaten to take away their tax-free status?

Sue Mandeville
Oregon

In the form of a tanka

it can happen here —
theocratic rule, that is;
where religion
would take the place of reason,
poisoning the well of hope.
Larry W. Bryant
Virginia

Mother proud of her three freethinkers

Thank you all for the important work you do. It is very much appreciated. The four conventions I have attended have given me a great deal of joy and hope. Reading Freethought Today is a highlight!

Annie Laurie and Dan and Anne Gaylor are real heroes to me. To the amazing staff and army of volunteers

— thank you one and all.
Joanie B. Nichols
Washington
P.S. I have raised my three children to be freethinkers, and I am proud of them.

New Testament: A kinder, gentler God?

Each year I attend an alumni luncheon (St. Joseph High School, Detroit class of ’57). This school was run by the Christian Brothers, who also had another school in Detroit — De La Salle. I was relating a story to an alum from the latter school about Brother Francis giving the religion lesson about God being a “jealous God.”

I told this fellow that I was certain that jealousy wasn’t a very good trait. His response was, “Well, that’s in the Old Testament, isn’t it?” He seemed pleased with himself, that it’s OK if it’s in the Old Testament. I suppose he figured God got nice in the New Testament after he sends his son to be brutally executed!

John Oman
Michigan

Mountain of work faces all of us

I saw [renowned Supreme Court analyst] Linda Greenhouse on TV with Bill Moyers recently. The Roberts (aka Catholic) Court is scary in its pronouncements. How can it be constitutional in our republic to impose Catholic practices on us, practices which the United Nations Committee on Human Rights condemned last January?

Women need access to abortion and birth control for numerous reasons, and Christian prayer should not be tolerated in public meetings.

There’s a mountain of work to do. Good luck!
Ellen Anderson
Illinois

Ridiculous soul concept needs challenge

Freethinkers should be challenging the superstitious belief that there is some kind of living, thinking, immortal creature living in a hollow space inside of us. Believers do not say how the soul could be invisible when leaving the dying body, or whether it is a solid, liquid or gaseous creature. When did it enter the body? How tall is it, what does it weigh, does it eat and sleep,

does it wear socks? Does it breathe when it is inside of you? Is it wet with body fluids? Does it have a pulse? Can two things occupy the same space? Do X-rays show the cavity that it lives in?

And a dozen other questions. It can’t be immortal unless it’s alive. So, is the soul real, or not?

Much of religious superstition depends on the idea that your soul will go to the “hereafter,” wherever that is. If its eyes are invisible to caregivers as it leaves the dying body, how can it see where it is going? If the deceased person died of TB, does the soul have TB, or does dying cure the disease? If the dead person used a cane, wore glasses and wore dentures, will his soul also have those things, or did dying make him young again?

I suggest that it is absolutely essential that FFRF confront this superstition, which is a basic part of the broader superstition of religion.

Robert H. Anderson
California

Churches getting free ride at tax time

Thanks for the work you are doing to keep church and state separate. If there is a “gay agenda,” I’m sure I don’t know what it is outside of equality for all. But the Religious Right definitely has an agenda, and it seems to be achieving the level of power to control everyone.

So, the battle to place church owned property on the tax rolls is a big one. Let church members support their own institutions and require them to contribute to the use of public resources.

Given the history and knowledge of church leaders’ actions, I don’t want to pay for their ability to circumvent the laws of the state or morality.

The bishops in their castles and the evangelists in their gated compounds with landing strips and jet planes are evidence of the excessive and overreaching interpretation of tax exemption for property used for charitable functions. When was the last time Kenneth Copeland hosted a church picnic at the parsonage?

Duane Haaland
Oregon

Pope’s Mafia injunction toothless in Chicago

The pope recently made a speech mentioning possible excommunication for Mafia members. I wonder whether his comments will have an effect on the Catholic Church in Chicago. For many, many decades, Chicago’s most nationally notorious Mafia gangsters have received funeral Masses and Catholic burials.

This practice has generated a great deal of disgust among observers. But it has also generated a great deal of revenue for Catholic clergy in Chicago. So I seriously doubt that the practice will end, despite what the pope says.

Walt Latocha
Illinois

In memoriam: McKinney, Kagin coincidences noted

I read with much sadness the report in the April issue that Edwin Kagin had died. I was acquainted with Ed through his visits to Atlanta and Lake Hypatia.

During my last Lake Hypatia visit, Ed sat across from me at lunch on the pavilion, during which I gave him a photo of his deceased wife, Helen, whom I’d photographed earlier there.

Ed was a native of Greenville, S.C., as was I. He was born Nov. 26, 1940, five days before my 10th birthday. His father was a Presbyterian minister. I was baptized a Presbyterian in August 1942. The “miracle” would have been, of course, if his father had baptized me and Ed had been present. But he didn’t, thereby ending the chase for a “miracle.”

Jack McKinney
Georgia

Subjected to creationism? Sue the b*st*rds!

In a report in a recent issue of The Economist on the California court ruling against teacher tenure, I was interested in the observation that “The case highlights a new tactic of education reformers: framing their case as a defense of children’s civil rights, not an attack on teachers.”

I wonder to what degree lawsuits over the teaching of creationism have used this tactic, as against the usual church/state argument. I have long felt that a case could be made that being taught bad science could hurt a high school student’s college admission chances, and could allow them to sue for resulting economic damages in terms of future earnings.

For example, if a student had to settle for Bob Jones University when MIT rejected them for poor scientific preparation.
Arkie Koehl
Hawaii

New York legislators disappoint diocese

There was a minor victory for us in New York state. The Legislature did not pass the Educational Investment Tax Credit Bill. The Catholic Church lobbied hard for this bill. The Buffalo Diocese is in the process of closing 10 schools and wanted taxpayers to subsidize Catholic schools.

George J. Saunders
New York

Fun for the whole family



Todd Reinhardt writes from Illinois:
“Hi Dan and friends. Loved *Godless*. Gave it to my son and he walked away from religion. Hope you appreciate the cartoon. I made it to fit on Facebook walls.”



Photo: David Pineda

Humanism in Guatemala

“Just 90 minutes after landing in Guatemala, I was on national television,” reports Dan Barker, FFRF co-president. “Canal Antigua is the station, and it was the 8:45 p.m. ‘news’ program, but it was like a talk show, lasting about 20 minutes. The two hosts are on the left in the photo. The man on the right is a theologian who talked gibberish about ‘We were created in the image of God.’ The hosts were very sympathetic, so it was a good interview.” (See more about the Guatemala event, next page.)



AGHS President Carlos Mendoza was able to arrange a private tour of the Mayan ruins at Iximché, outside of Guatemala City. Dan Barker is standing (with permission of the local people) in front of the ancient Mayan altar, still used by indigenous people today, with friendly guide Luciano. Luciano said they have to be careful who might come to the site for worship, because “some might use it for witchcraft.”

Sharing the Crank Mail

Special treatment under the law for religious people was popular in this abbreviated edition of the crank mail, printed as received.

Miserable with your own life: You should re-name your site “Demons of Satan and servers of Jesus Christ haters”. Hell will be your eternal dwelling at the moment of your death! — *Grady Brown*

you: You guys must be bigger assholes than the assholes at the IRS, if you want to partner with the against churches in America to shut them down. — *doug akers, columbus, ohio*

So you did not like the Hobby Lobby decision: This white, Catholic male was thrilled. Now don't you have the Little Sisters of the Poor to pursue? — *kenneth k*

Court ruling: Too bad all nine judges are not Catholic, then the supreme court could be counted on to always rule in a most judicious manner! — *John Duffy*

Hobby Lobby: Nations build on lies, such as communism and socialism and all the isms, have risen and fallen. See you either at the top with the truth, or the fallen with the likes of Stalin and Hitler. — *M. Gazal*

Hello: came across your website and fleetingly read a few stuff. are you opposed to all religions eg islam hinduism or just the church? — *Daisy Pillai, CARLETONVILLE*

Religious Liberty: So you guys think religious liberty trumps women's rights. I believe contraception is immoral. That being said, if you guys want your women contracepting why don't you guys stand up like men and pay for it yourself. — *rjvrable*

Hobby Lobby: Your latest tirade of ant-Catholicism bigotry has no place in America. My legal team is looking into having your tax-exempt status revoked. — *John Lushis, Jr, Bethlehem, PA*

Shame: Your anti-Catholic venom is beneath contempt. Hitler would be proud. — *William W. Whiting*

Freedom from Tyranny: Couldn't your time be better spent? But I guess I should not be surprised at your self-centeredness since you have no concept of self-sacrifice. Note: it's all about a cross. I am sad you cannot grasp that. — *Lynn Weathers, Ohio*

Stuff it: Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it Stuff it — *Stuffit@Stuff.com*

Mr. Paul Aints sponsorship



On July 12, FFRF Co-President Dan Barker addressed Minnesota Atheists and Humanists of Minnesota and met the pig that greeted the Aints' game crowd. Before St. Paul was St. Paul (thanks to a Catholic missionary), it was named Pig's Eye Landing after a popular bootlegger/tavern owner nicknamed Pig's Eye due to his damaged eye.



Tailgating with entertainer Bill Murray (his cardboard cutout anyway), half owner of the St. Paul Saints minor league baseball team, during “Aints Night” were these Minnesota Atheists members. Murray is also honorary team psychologist. It was the third annual event, in which the Saints rebrand themselves as the Mr. Paul Aints, this year co-sponsored by FFRF. It's a secular effort to counter the ubiquitous Faith and Family Nights put on by Christian fans.



Thou shall steal!

Eric Jayne (left), Minnesota Atheists president, with an actor playing “Doubting Thomas.” Throughout the July 11 game at Midway Stadium in St. Paul, Thomas made proclamations such as “I doubt you will take a good picture” just before this photo was taken. He also loudly vocalized doubt about calls from the umpires. The Aints/Saints beat the Kansas City T-Bones 3-2 in 11 innings.



Almost 400 people attended the launch event for the “Asociación Guatemalteca de Humanistas Seculares” at the Teatro Lux in Guatemala City on July 17. David Pineda (at podium), president of the group which became officially recognized in April, said he was surprised and encouraged by such a large turnout in their predominantly religious country. Board members are shown. FFRF’s Dan Barker was the keynoter, speaking in Spanish about his preacher-to-atheist story, and apologizing for his years of missionary work in Latin America. Dan also performed some music, including the debut of his new song “Es Sólo Natural.” The event was co-sponsored by FFRF, the Atheist Alliance International and the International Humanist and Ethical Union. Their website is humanistasguatemala.org/. Listen to Freethought Radio’s interview with Pineda at ffrf.libsyn.com/ (July 27, 2014 show).

Freethought Hall addition going up, thanks to donors

The listing below reports donations to FFRF’s Building Expansion Fund from June 19 to July 27. It’s not cumulative except for the total. Donations received before June 19 were listed in prior issues. Freethought Today will list subsequent donations in future issues. No donors are identified by name unless giving express permission.

Check out the project and levels of support, including paving stones and vestibule tiles, at: ffrf.org/ffrf-building-fund-contribution-page

John D. Long, Florida, \$4,986.09
Anonymous, California, \$3,000
Jeffrey and Michelle LaVicka, West Virginia, \$2,500
Alan Hann, Florida, \$2,500
Claudette StPierre, Colorado, \$1,000
Walter Bilofsky, California, \$1,000
Jack McKinney, Georgia, \$500
Dana Wichmann, Minnesota, \$300
Oguz Poroy, Iowa, \$249
Gary P. Greenhood, Georgia, \$150
Mr. Edward M. Fick Jr., Delaware, \$150

Jay Huemmer, Wisconsin, \$100
Karon Park, Georgia, \$100
Nora A. Williams, California, \$100
Stefanie Moritz and Vince Jenkins, Wisconsin, \$50
Corey M. Dapore, Ohio, \$50
Anonymous, New York, \$50
Anonymous, Norway, \$25
Alice M. Kachman, Michigan, \$20
Anonymous, Virginia, \$10
Mr. Raphael Andrew Bannon-Guasp, Connecticut, \$10

Subtotal: \$16,850.09

Cumulative Total: \$1,895,309.73
Goal: \$2 million

If you gave a gift designated to the building fund which does not appear to be reflected in this list or in prior issues, please contact us so we can check our records and publish your gift. Contact Katie Daniel at (608)256-8900 from 9-5 CDT weekdays or email katie@ffrf.org.



Sarah Braasch, FFRF’s very first legal intern back in 2008, returned in late July to visit Freethought Hall on her way to start a doctoral program in the philosophy of law at Yale University, just to time to see the construction project. Sarah has written several popular blogs and Freethought Today articles.

FFRF welcomes 20 new Lifetime Members from 15 states



Photo: Lauren Seering

Thank you, Joyce
New Life Member Joyce Steensrud delivered her check to the FFRF office in person.

FFRF is delighted to announce 20 new Lifetime Members:

Ron Arnon, David Bayley, Michael T. Cohen, Donald Ferguson, Jimmye France, Dr. Robert Hatlelid, Rachel E. Heller (gift from Edmund Heller), Jennifer Jacobus and Penny Corbitt, Dr. Ludwig Koukal, Dr. Narcinda Lern-

er, Diane Oxley, Roger Paul (gift from Thomas Fischer), Harry Phillips, Dianne Post, David Pullen, Donna Silver and George Savage, Harold Streeter and Dr. Diana White.

States represented: Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Wisconsin.

Individual Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000 designated as membership or membership renewal, mean never another renewal notice, go into a rainy day reserved fund and are deductible for income-tax purposes for the generous supporter!

Our warm thanks to Diana, Harold, George, Donna, David, Dianne, Harry, Thomas, Diane, Cindy, Ludwig, Penny, Jennfer, Edmund, Robert, Jimmye, Donald, Michael, David and Ron!

Overheard

I will lose my job and maybe they will arrest me and put me in jail or they will throw me out of the country.

Anonymous Syrian atheist on sneaking food during the 30-day fast required by the Muslim holy month, “Atheists Fake Ramadan Hunger to Avoid Jail”
vocativ.com, 7-8-14

My birthday wish this year is bring back our girls now, and alive.

Malala Yousafzai, 17, who survived being shot in the head by Pakistani Taliban for campaigning for girls’ education, visiting Nigerian parents of 200 girls abducted by the Islamist terror group Boko Haram
Reuters, 7-14-14

FFRF’s 37th national conference, Los Angeles, Oct. 24-26

‘One Life to Live’ fitting message for skeptics?



Johanson



Carroll



Galloway



Hamilton



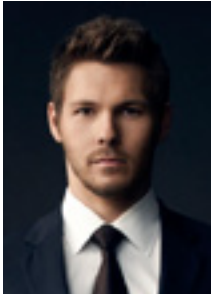
Stevens



Pinn



Chemerinsky



Clifton

Emmy Award-winning actor **Scott Clifton** will welcome attendees to FFRF’s 37th annual national convention in Los Angeles the weekend of Oct. 24-26. Clifton, who turns 30 on Halloween, starred as Dillon Quartermaine on ABC’s “General Hospital,” Schuyler Joplin on ABC’s “One Life to Live” and currently plays Liam Cooper on CBS’ “The Bold and the Beautiful.”

He won Daytime Emmys in 2011 and 2013, is a longtime atheist and host of the freethought YouTube channel “Theoretical Bullshit.”

His welcome will focus on what it’s like being an outspoken atheist in Hollywood. He was a guest July 6 on Freethought Radio. Go to ffrf.libsyn.com/ to listen.

Also on the roster of convention speakers and honorees are **Linda Stephens**, an atheist, longtime FFRF Member and new Lifetime Member, and **Susan Galloway**, who identifies as a cultural Jew. They will both receive Freethinker of the Year awards.

The conference takes place at the luxury Biltmore Hotel, 506 S. Grand Ave. Rates of \$169 single or double,

\$199 triple and \$229 quad are being held for FFRF through Sept. 23 (or as long as availability lasts).

Phone 1-800-245-8673 and identify yourself as part of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. You can reserve online by going to ffrf.org/outreach/convention/. Click on the link under “37th Annual National Convention – 2014” to reach the Biltmore’s registration page.

Other state/church honorees include **Erwin Chemerinsky**, dean of the University of California-Irvine School of Law and author of *The Conservative Assault on the Constitution*, accepting a Champion of the First Amendment Award, and **Marci Hamilton**, Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, who’ll receive a Freethought Heroine Award.

Hamilton, a constitutional scholar, is the author of *God and the Gavel: The Perils of Extreme Religious Liberty*, and wrote FFRF’s amicus brief against the Hobby Lobby Supreme Court appeal.

Anthony Pinn, the first African-American to hold an endowed chair at Rice University, is professor of humanities and religious studies. His latest book is *Writing God’s Obituary: How*

a Good Methodist Became a Better Atheist.

Two distinguished scientists will accept FFRF’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award, reserved for public figures who “tell it like it is” about religion: paleo-anthropologist **Donald C. Johanson**, discoverer of “Lucy,” author of many books and director of the Institute of Human Origins at Arizona State University in Tempe; and physicist **Sean Carroll**, senior research associate in the Department of Physics at the California Institute of Technology. Carroll is author of *The Particle at the End of the Universe: How the Hunt for the Higgs Boson Leads Us to the Edge of a New World*.

New York-based photographer **Christopher Johnson** will give an uplifting presentation based on his fascinating new photo book *A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy & Meaning in a World Without God*.

Other speakers and honorees will be announced in future issues and online at ffrf.org/convention/.

The conference begins Friday afternoon with workshops featuring FFRF staff attorneys and an appetizer reception from 3-5. Registration opens up at 2 p.m. and continues through the convention.

The program begins formally at 7 p.m. Friday, including speakers, honorees and a complimentary dessert reception. Saturday starts with the non-traditional Non-Prayer Breakfast. An all-day program concludes after the evening keynote speech.

Convention highlights include the drawing for “clean” (pre-“In God We Trust”) currency and irreverent entertainment at the piano by FFRF Co-President Dan (“The Singing Atheist”) Barker.

The annual membership meeting and meeting of FFRF state representatives is Sunday morning, with the state rep meeting concluding by noon.

FFRF registration

Registration is \$65 for individual FFRF member, \$70 for nonmember/spouse accompanying member, \$110 for nonmember (or join for \$40 and save five bucks!). Student registration is only \$10.

Meals

Two optional Saturday meals are offered: The **Non-Prayer Breakfast** and the **Saturday Banquet Dinner**. The full breakfast (\$30 including 23% service charge and 9% sales tax) is freshly squeezed orange juice, muffin and Danish basket, fresh-cracked country scrambled eggs, thick-cut applewood bacon, herb-roasted red potatoes, freshly brewed regular and decaffeinated coffee and Harney & Son teas. Vegetarian is all of the above, but tomato slice is substituted for bacon.

Dinner (\$55 including 23% service charge and 9% sales tax) is a choice of chicken or halibut with potato, vegetable and dessert (or chef’s choice vegetarian). Vegan and gluten-free meal options are available.

You may also register online:
ffrf.org/outreach/convention/2014-convention

‘Next phase of birth control war’

Religion Clause, quoting Care 2, reported July 17 on a suit filed in June called “the next phase of the birth control war.” Florida nursing school graduate Sara Hellwege claims she was denied an interview for a nurse-midwife position at a women’s health center that gets federal funds when she said she wouldn’t prescribe hormonal contraceptives for religious reasons.

In *Hellwege v. Tampa Family Health Centers*, the plaintiff claims her rights were violated under federal and state laws which provide that no person may be required to provide services that violate their religious or moral beliefs.

Sign up today!

Return with payment to: FFRF, Attn: Convention, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701

Freedom From Religion Foundation’s
37th Annual National Convention
October 24–26, 2014
Los Angeles, California

Make checks payable to “FFRF”



Number registering

_____ FFRF member registration(s) @ \$65 per person	\$_____
_____ Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$70.....	\$_____
_____ Non-member registration(s) @ \$110.....	\$_____
(Save \$5 by becoming an FFRF Member)	
_____ Student registration(s) @ \$10	\$_____
_____ Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast @ \$30* per person	\$_____
_____ Classic _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan _____ Check if gluten-free	
_____ Saturday Night Dinner @ \$55* per person	\$_____
_____ Chicken _____ Halibut _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan _____ Check if gluten-free	
* Meal prices include 23% gratuity & 9% sales tax	
Total: \$_____	

Name(s)	Please include names of all registrants for nametags
Address	
City/State/ZIP	Please include phone/email (in case we have a question about your registration)