

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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February 5, 2015

***SENT via U.S. Mail and Email: [dgowan@azleg.gov](mailto:dgowan@azleg.gov)***

David M. Gowan  
Speaker of the House  
Arizona House of Representatives  
Capitol Complex  
1700 West Washington, Room 223  
Phoenix AZ 85007-2890

Re: Bible in House lounge

Dear Speaker Gowan:

On behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation and our 21,500 nonreligious members nationwide, including 600 Arizona members and our Phoenix-area chapter, FFRF Valley of the Sun, we write to respectfully protest the solitary “holy” book — the bible — chosen for display (open to Proverbs) in the House of Representatives lounge, and to offer literature more appropriate to a government setting.

Legislators should not take inspiration or counsel from the bible. Reading this ponderous tome is unlikely to result in thought, let alone legislation, beneficial or acceptable to Arizonans. For instance, it would not be appropriate for the House to take guidance from the biblical injunction to murder homosexuals — Leviticus 20:13 — before voting on discrimination bills. Surely the 4% of LGBT adults in Arizona whom the bible condemns to death wouldn’t approve.

Nor would 3.2 million Arizona women appreciate legislators reading about biblical laws requiring them to “be silent”<sup>1</sup> and “submit”<sup>2</sup> to men before a vote concerning their rights.

Nor would Arizona’s one in five nonbelievers appreciate legislators taking to heart various injunctions to exterminate blasphemers and infidels.<sup>3</sup>

It seems unlikely to expect representatives to vote objectively on bills such as House Bill 2284 (allowing for snap inspections for abortion clinics) while the bible lies open to perusal in the lounge. Ironically, the bible is anything but “pro-life.” It advocates committing atrocities upon children and pregnant women: “their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant

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<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 14:34-36; I Timothy 2:11.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 5:22-24; I Peter 3:1; Col. 3:18-19.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Leviticus 24:13-16

women ripped open.”<sup>4</sup> The Psalmist says “Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus himself promises to kill children in Revelation 2:22-23.

Perhaps there is no other book between whose covers life is so cheap. The anti-child god of the bible demands that Abraham be willing to murder his own child to prove obedience, and Jephthah *actually* sacrifices his young daughter to that god. In fact, the Christian bible is predicated on the unsavory concept of child sacrifice — a deity who appeases his own anger by arranging the torture and execution of his son.

From Moses’ magic wand, to women made of clay or ribs (the bible can’t decide which), to a boat<sup>6</sup> that is half the size of modern cruise ships<sup>7</sup> but somehow manages to cram 13 million individuals from 6.5 million land animal species,<sup>8</sup> to virgin births, and zombie deities—the bible is full of nonsense. Racism, slavery, misogyny, genocide, infanticide, and fable: surely there is a more appropriate book that legislators could keep in their lounge? Or, at the very least, you ought to do as Thomas Jefferson did and cut out all the nonsense, including the virgin birth and the resurrection.

The members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation believe that if it’s a choice between obeying the word of a god we have no evidence of, and preserving human life and liberty, we must choose people over dogma and blind faith. One has only to look at recent examples of the barbaric executions done in the name of Allah by true believers to realize how dangerous it is when faith trumps reason and compassion, when religion runs amok — or runs government.

Fundamentally, the issue, of course, is not the pros and cons of the bible, or which “holy book” a majority of legislators may adhere to in their personal lives. The issue is the necessity for elected officials — who represent citizens of all and of no religious persuasions — to honor the entirely godless and secular United States Constitution, whose only references to religion are exclusionary, such as that there can be no religious test for public office. Your statement as quoted in the Arizona Republic, that our country was founded on biblical principles, could not be more misguided. If we are a Christian nation, why doesn’t our Constitution say so? In 1797, America made a treaty with Tripoli, declaring that “the government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.” This was written under Washington’s presidency, and unanimously approved by the Senate under John Adams. We should all take pride in the fact that our founders were first among nations to separate religion from government.

Arizona is not a theocracy, it is part of a republic predicated on the rule of secular — not biblical — law. Religious doctrine has no place in our secular halls of government (or government lounges).

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<sup>4</sup> Hosea 13:16 *NIV*.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 137:9

<sup>6</sup> About 530 ft long with a 87 foot beam.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Arnold, “What Are the Sizes of Carnival Cruise Ships?,” *USA Today*, available at <http://usat.ly/1ueChhP>

<sup>8</sup> Census of Marine Life. “How many species on Earth? About 8.7 million, new estimate says.” *ScienceDaily*. *ScienceDaily*, 24 August 2011. <http://bit.ly/1xqW2O1>

Why not place a copy of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights in the lounge? If you insist on retaining a sectarian bible, despite its exclusionary message to nonbelievers and nonChristians, we would like to offer to donate some freethinking literature to help balance the bible's xenophobic, homophobic, misogynistic, filicidal messages. We'd be honored to donate any or all of the following:

- *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins
- *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Non-Believer*, edited by Christopher Hitchens
- *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist* by Dan Barker
- *The Born Again Skeptic's Guide to the Bible*, by Ruth Hurmence Green

Please remove the bible, which sends an unfortunate message of favoritism and endorsement, or let us know which of the above books we may donate for your legislative lounge.

Very truly,

Handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Barker & Annie Laurie Gaylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor  
Co-Presidents  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

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