

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 · MADISON, WI 53701 · (608) 256-8900 · WWW.FFRF.ORG

June 28, 2017

SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: director@wildlife.nh.gov

Mr. Glenn Normandeau
Executive Director
New Hampshire Fish and Game
11 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Inappropriate Religious Endorsement

Dear Director Normandeau:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to bring to your attention our concern over distribution of religious materials that occurred at a hunter's safety class facilitated by New Hampshire Fish and Game. We were contacted by a dismayed resident who participated in the class. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 29,000 members across the country, including members in New Hampshire. Our purpose is to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

It is our understanding that New Hampshire Fish and Game facilitates hunter's safety classes throughout New Hampshire. We understand that people can register for these classes on the New Hampshire Fish and Game website. Our complainant attended one of these classes hosted by the Heritage Free Will Baptist Church in Laconia, N.H., on April 6-8, 2017. Our complainant reports that everyone who attended the class received religious flyers with prayers and information about church services. We understand that a pastor taught this class and that these religious materials were enclosed with all of the official hunter's safety documents and study packets. Please see the enclosed photos.

These proselytizing handouts are supremely insulting to non-Christians, and nonbelievers. The State of New Hampshire has no business holding workshops of vital importance to hunting safety that berate attendees as "sinners," etc. Such a misuse of a state function for sectarian, proselytizing purposes is disgraceful.

It is a fundamental principle of Establishment Clause jurisprudence that a government entity cannot in any way endorse religion. The Supreme Court has explained that "the prohibition against governmental endorsement of religion 'preclude[s] government from conveying or attempting to convey a message that religion or a particular religious belief is favored or preferred.'" *Cnty. of Allegheny v. ACLU Greater Pittsburgh Chapter*, 492 U.S. 573, 593 (1989). The goal of the endorsement test is to ensure that the government does not "appear[] to take a position on questions of religious belief." *Id.* at 594.

Allowing churches to distribute their religious literature through a class co-sponsored by New Hampshire Fish and Game constitutes government endorsement and advancement of religion. It also sends the ancillary message to members of the audience who are nonadherents 'that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.' " *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 309-10 (2000) (quoting *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. at 688 (O'Connor, J., concurring)). Such a practice alienates non-Christian members of the public whose religious beliefs are inconsistent with the message being promoted by the church, including the 23% of the U.S. population that is nonreligious.¹

We urge you to investigate this matter and ensure that future classes co-sponsored by New Hampshire Fish and Game do not involve the distribution of religious materials. We would strongly urge the department, based on this report, to refrain from conducting any future workshops in churches. Neutral settings should be sought. Please inform us in writing of the steps you are taking to resolve this concern so that we may inform our complainant. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly,

A 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

DB/ALG:cal

¹ America's Changing Religious Landscape, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (May 12, 2015), available at www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/.

Hunter Safety Training
Sponsored by
Heritage Free Will Baptist Church

Please join us for Sunday Services:

Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
We have classes for all ages

Morning Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.

Sunday Evening Bible Study: 6:00 p.m.

We have child care available
for every service.

349 Meredith Center Rd
Laconia, NH 03246

How Can I Become God's Child?

The answer is in God's Word, the Bible.

Admit that you are a sinner.
We are all sinners; we all do wrong things (Romans 3:23).

God is perfect. He must punish sin (Romans 6:23).

We cannot get to Heaven by trying to be good (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

God showed His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for us (Romans 5:8).

Believe Who Jesus is and what Jesus did.

Jesus is God's Son Who came to earth and was the only One ever to live a perfect life. He died on the cross to take the punishment for sin. He was buried and rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4) God promises eternal life to all who believe on Jesus (Acts 16:31; Romans 6:23).

Choose to trust in Jesus.

Believe that Jesus, God's Son, took the punishment for your sin. Trust Jesus as your Savior, knowing that He is the only way you can have your sin forgiven and become a child of God.