

Freethought Today

Vol. 31 No. 9

Published by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.

November 2014

County rescinds 'direct deposit' to Baptist ministry

The Covington County Commission in Andalusia, Ala., voted unanimously Nov. 6 to rescind a \$3,000 appropriation from taxpayer funds to the Covington Baptist Association for a men's ministry whose purpose is "to get more men to church."

The vote was in response to an Oct. 27 complaint letter from the Freedom From Religion Foundation protesting the flagrant constitutional violation. FFRF represents more than 21,500 members, including 200 Alabama members as well as its longest-lived chapter, the Alabama Freethought Association.

The commission voted Oct. 8 to appropriate \$3,000. Katherine Paige, FFRF legal fellow, sent the commission a second complaint letter Nov. 7 after learning that Commissioner Harold Elmore might ask to renew the grant to the ministry under the guise of funding building renovations.

Paige investigated property records and learned that Elmore was an incorporator of the Judson Baptist Church, which owns the building and runs the ministry. Elmore serves as church deacon and is one of the Covington Baptist Association's four trustees.

"The commission cannot escape the grant's religious purpose, and Commissioner Elmore's involvement raises serious ethical concerns under Alabama law," wrote Paige.

"The grant had, and would still have, a religious purpose: funding a Christian men's ministry," said Paige. At the Oct. 8 commission meeting, Elmore was asked if the ministry was for Baptists only. He replied, "No, it's just a men's ministry. If any denomination wants to attend, we don't even claim to be a denomination, that's what it's for, just trying to get folks to accept the Lord."

Any further donation would be "tainted with the religious purpose of the first grant and the men's ministry," FFRF noted. "Alabama law prohibits public officials from using their official position to obtain personal gain

for themselves or for any business with which they are associated," said Paige.

FFRF also resubmitted a records request, which it had dropped after learning the grant had been rescinded.

"The Covington Baptist Association and the Judson Baptist Church are free to conduct their men's ministry, but the government may not support or fund it or their buildings," concluded FFRF's letter. "We assume this matter is dropped, but in the event the commission chooses to readdress the issue and provide support for this ministerial endeavor, FFRF will be inclined, at the very least, to submit an official complaint with the Alabama Ethics Commission."



God Graveyard

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics had a spooky Halloween display in front of Bascom Hall: "Here lie the graves of thousands of dead gods. Once worshiped by entire civilizations, now only myths. How much longer will the gods of today last?" Pictured is AHA officer and erswhile FFRF intern Sam Erickson.



Photo: Andrew Seidel

FFRF held its 37th annual convention in Los Angeles in October. See more photos, pages 12–17, 24.



Do not pass Go; do not collect \$3,000 (so to speak), was basically the message in voiding a check to a religious group trying to secure more of a Baptist monopoly in Andalusia, Ala.

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Meet a Legal Staffer



Photo: Brianna Froese Photography

Markert family values: Rebecca and Audrey and Mike and Dexter.

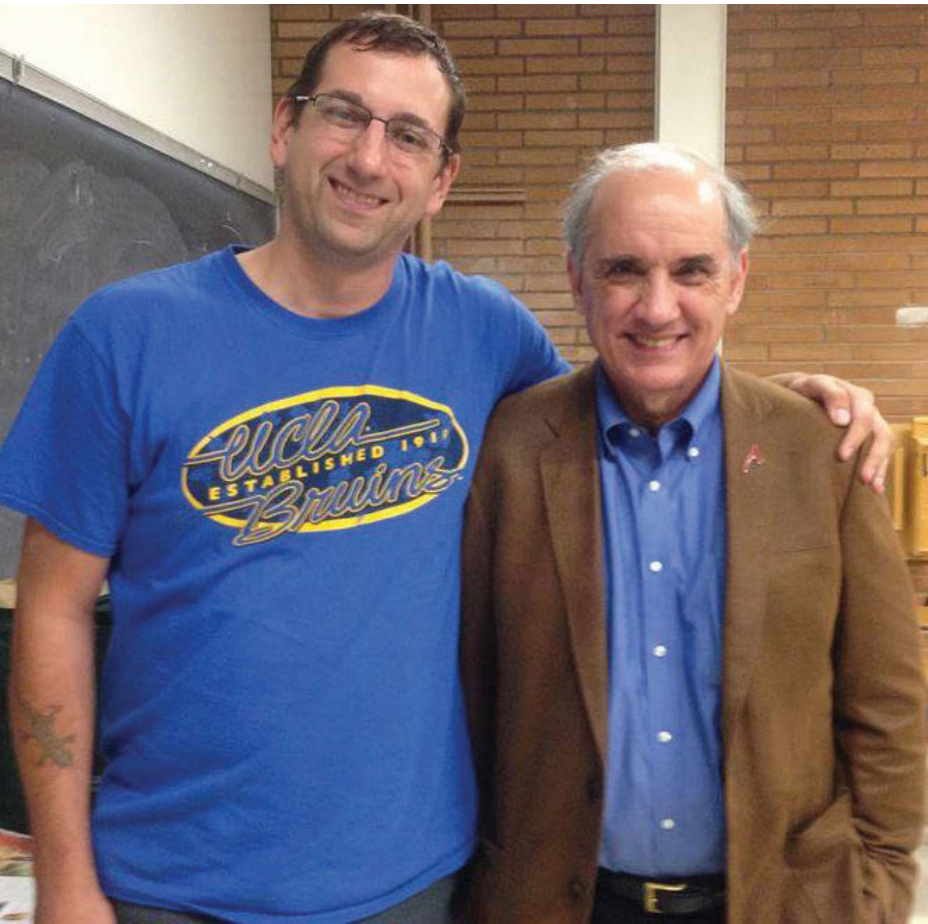
Name: Rebecca Markert.
Where and when I was born: Green Bay, Wis., 1976.
Education: B.A. in German, international relations and political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1998); J.D. from Roger Williams University School of Law, Bristol, R.I., (2008).
Family: I live in Verona (just outside of Madison) with my husband, Mike, and our two children, Dexter, 3, and Audrey, 1.
How I came to work at FFRF: By chance. I was graduating from law school and looking to live in Madison and came across a job posting on a legal jobs board. I thought it would perfectly fit my love for constitutional law,

separation of state and church and the ability to work on federal issues.
What I do here: A lot. I'm the senior staff attorney, so in addition to state/church complaints (for issues like crosses on government property, mayoral prayer breakfasts, Good Friday closings, electioneering by churches and religious groups, religion in public schools and holiday displays for the 1st, 2nd and 6th federal appellate circuits), I manage the legal department, assign projects, train attorneys and hire interns and clerks. I put together all the administrative policies and protocols to make FFRF's legal team work more cohesively and efficiently.
What I like best about it: Working in constitutional law. There are not a lot

of lawyers who ever get to work in this area and I get to do it full time. I also love working with FFRF members and seeing how my work directly effects change (hopefully for the better). And the tea. FFRF has some amazing tea.
What sucks about it: Victories that look like losses. My first case involved a nativity scene on the courthouse lawn in 2009 in Manitowoc County, Wis. We were thrown out of court before reaching the merits of the case, but the nativity scene never returned to the courthouse again. During litigation, a church offered to place the crèche on its lawn, where it's been on display ever since. Victories like that don't make the news!
I spend a lot of time thinking about: How wonderful life is now that Dexter and Audrey are in the world. And how I'm never going to have the time to see everything in my Netflix queue.
I spend little if any time thinking about: This was a hard question to answer, but NASCAR and soccer come to mind.

My religious upbringing was: Roman Catholic.
My doubts about religion started: I don't remember an exact time or event, I've always been skeptical. My parents never discouraged questioning, or critical thinking for that matter.
Things I like: Hugs from my kids and hearing them laugh, the Green Bay Packers, watching baseball, summers in Madison, the Fourth of July; the National Mall in D.C., going to movies at the theater, Spotted Cow beer from New Glarus Brewing, traveling and Diet Coke.
Things I smite: The death penalty, concealed carry and stand your ground laws, the lack of high-speed rail running through Madison, misusing the apostrophe and anything requiring audience participation.
In my golden years: I'll hopefully be debt-free from my student loans and be able to be a snowbird, spending summers in Madison and winters in Arizona or North Carolina.

Veteran freethinker



Nick Stein of the Bruin Alliance Skeptics & Secularists at UCLA, pictured with Co-President Dan Barker, writes to thank Dan for speaking to the group: "I only wished that I knew you while getting harassed and discriminated against in the U.S. Navy and Air Force Reserve 10 years ago. Being a veteran with two honorable discharges and eight years of service, protecting and defending the Constitution of the United States of America are not just words for me, and I continue to do so. Thanks so much for sharing your valuable time with us and inspiring the next generation of freethinkers. And please, come back. We'll leave the Fiat Lux on for you!"

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Don't miss a single issue! If you move, notify us directly and promptly. **The Post Office does not forward third-class mail.** FFRF cannot be responsible for replacing back issues if we have not been notified prior to your move. Back issues, while they last, may be ordered for \$2 each.

A Note to Members

Your address label shows the expiration date of your membership in FFRF, which includes your subscription to Freethought Today and "Private Line." If it says November 2014 or earlier please renew! Your prompt renewal (\$40-single membership; \$50-household; \$100 gung-ho; \$25-student) saves us time and postage, and is tax-deductible. Freethought Today is published 10 times a year, with combined issues in Jan/Feb and June/July. Send membership or renewal to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701.

ffrf.org/donate

Freethought Today

published by Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.

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November 2014
The only freethought newspaper in the United States

Legal staff busy preparing, sending complaint letters

A summary of legal complaints sent by FFRF legal staff since the last issue of Freethought Today. (ISD is Independent School District.)

Contact: Hardin-Jefferson ISD, Sour Lake, Texas

Violation: After receiving a letter from FFRF about a teacher-run Christian club in an elementary school, the teachers wrote an "open letter" to parents asking them to pray for the club. The letter said the club would now be student-led but urged parents to encourage their children to share with the group and told parents to contact one of the three employees to "avoid conflicting speaker scheduling."

Two district classrooms have crosses on their walls, the high school's football games open with prayer and the school song includes the line "and when the year is over, God bless our school."

Contact: Waller ISD, Houston, Texas

Violation: The district's high school had a poster in its library entitled "The Bulldogs' Prayer." The school also solicited faculty to advertise a "Bulldogs Cure for Cancer" T-shirt with the word "Faith" on the back.

Contact: Habersham County Sheriff, Ga.

Violation: The sheriff's Facebook page regularly posts religious messages, including a lengthy prayer posted on Sept. 11 and misattributed to Thomas Jefferson.

Contact: Chester County Commission, West Chester, Pa.

Violation: The county's holiday display includes a nativity and a menorah among other decorations. FFRF urged the commission to include a local freethought group's "Tree of Knowledge" display.

Contact: Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, Ada, Okla.

Violation: Course instructors and materials repeatedly promoted religion and a belief in God.

Contact: East Whittier City School District, Calif.

Violation: Teachers at East Whittier Middle School and Granada Middle School participate in weekly bible study classes with students during lunch.

Contact: Clinton County R-III School District, Plattsburg, Mo.

Violation: Clinton County R-III Middle School's principal writes bible verses on the whiteboard in his office and places a bible on his desk in full view of students and visitors.

Contact: Poudre School District, Fort Collins, Colo.

Violation: A Laurel Elementary School kindergarten teacher had a picture hanging on her classroom wall with a bible quote, "I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14."

Contact: Yukon City Council, Okla.

Violation: The council voted to display "In God We Trust" in the council's chambers

Contact: Clinton Public Schools, Madison County Schools, Pearl Public School District, Miss.

Violation: These schools participated in a swim meet which opened with a Christian prayer facilitated by meet organizers.

Contact: Seminole County Attorney, Fla.

Violation: A county employee in the Water and Sewer Billing Department sends messages to county residents from her county email with a bible quote in her signature, "Thank God for everything, be Grateful. 1 Thessalonians 5:18."

Contact: Texas A&M University, College Station

Violation: The university began broadcasting prayers over the loudspeaker at football games and also includes prayer at graduation.

Contact: Mayor of Huntington, W.Va.

Violation: The mayor organized a prayer event to end addiction, releasing a video asking local religious leaders to join him in prayer.

Contact: Mansfield City Council, Texas

Violation: The council denied a local atheist the opportunity to give its invocation.

Contact: Madison County School District, Fla.

Violation: A private religious event occurring at the district's high school was extensively advertised on the grounds of Madison County Central School.

Contact: Cranston Public Schools, R.I.

Violation: Western Hills Middle School students were given a story entitled "A Mustard Seed that Threatened Imperial Power," presenting the biblical account of Jesus and his apostles as factual, and a game titled "The Medieval Church," which quizzed students on the origins of Christianity as presented in the bible and Christianity in the Middle Ages, while ignoring historical events like the Crusades that would portray Christianity negatively.

Contact: Naval Base Kitsap, Bremerton, Wash.

Violation: The base's pinning ceremony, which was mandatory for all officers being promoted, included an invocation and a benediction.

Contact: North Georgia State Fair, University of Missouri volleyball, Mel-

low Mushroom restaurant, Ala.

Violation: These entities offered church bulletin discounts.

Contact: Poplar Bluff Public Schools, Mo., Thomas-Fay-Custer Unified Schools, Okla.

Violation: Schools broadcast loudspeaker prayers before football games, and the Poplar Bluffs Senior High School team has two team chaplains.

Contact: Iowa Law Enforcement Academy

Violation: The academy included opening and closing Christian prayers at its graduation ceremonies.

Contact: Round Rock ISD, Texas

Violation: Cedar Ridge High School's internet filter censors websites with information about atheism and certain minority religions as promoting "alternative beliefs," while granting access to other websites promoting religious ideas.

Contact: Liberty County Elections Supervisor, Ga.

Violation: The Registrar's Office, which served as the early voting location in Liberty County, displayed bible quotes behind the voter check-in counter.

Contact: Chilton County Schools, Clanton, Ala.

Violation: A bible was prominently displayed in a glass case near the principal's office at Jemison High School, bible quotes are displayed on banners throughout the school's hallways during special events, and a teacher regularly displayed bible passages in her classroom.

Contact: U.S. Attorney for the District of Maine

Violation: Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret D. McGaughey, when asked to identify common trends in the profiles of criminal defendants, said, "There was no religion." She explained that religion "instills moral values in early childhood" that "tend to stick with a person throughout their life."

Contact: Mesa Public Schools, Ariz.

Violation: Mountain View High School's marching band dedicated a performance to the military that involved rows of Latin crosses.

Contact: Indiana Academy, Muncie

Violation: A teacher sends regular emails to students promoting a weekly bible study and other religious events like See You at the Pole and a Christian charity drive. She was directly involved with the bible study.

Contact: Valdosta City Schools, Ga.

Violation: Pinevale Elementary School displayed a Ten Commandments poster in its library.

Contact: Paris School District, Ark.

Violation: Paris Middle School allowed Gideons to distribute bibles to

**WE ARE
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FFRF has sent three complaint letters in the last two months about state/church violations in the Licking Valley School District, Newark, Ohio. One involved football coach involvement in prayer, another was about a religious assembly put on by Jubilee Gang ("100% ministry") at an elementary school, and the other involved a high school marching band wearing T-shirts with the word "Salvation" on them.

fifth graders, announcing the distribution as part of its morning reports.

Contact: Fauquier County Public Schools, Warrenton, Va.

Violation: A substitute bus driver at Grace Miller Elementary School passed out fliers promoting a church's services and events.

Contact: Washington Department of Licensing

Violation: The department's personalized license plate application prohibits plated deemed to be "blasphemous."

Contact: Evansville Vanderburgh School Corp., Ind.; Anniston City Schools, Ala.; White Oaks ISD, Texas; Camas School District, Wash.

Violation: Coaches led athletes in prayer and/or participated in students' prayers.

Contact: Homewood City Schools, Ala.

Violation: Football teams have a team chaplain that leads prayers and sometimes delivers a sermon. Church representatives are permitted to circulate around lunchrooms and recruit students. A Christian club organized by a teacher meets weekly. Students who arrive at school before classes are required to congregate at the club, which operates essentially as a church, with a youth pastor leading a worship service.

Contact: Walker County Board of Education, Ga.

Violation: This school board prays at their meetings.

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

Five Easy Prayers for Pagans

1

O Karma, Dharma, pudding & pie,
gimme a break before I die:
grant me wisdom, will, & wit,
purity, probity, pluck, & grit.
Trustworthy, helpful, friendly, kind,
gimme great abs and a steel-trap mind.
And forgive. Ye Gods, some humble advice—
these little blessings would suffice
to beget an earthly paradise:
make the bad people good
and the good people nice,
and before our world goes over the brink,
teach the believers how to think.

4

O Mammon, Thou who art daily dissed
by everyone, yet boast more true disciples
than all other gods together,
Thou whose eerie sheen
gleameth from Corporate Headquarters
and Vatican Treasury alike, Thou
whose glittering eye impales us
in the X-ray vision of plastic surgeons,
the golden leer of televangelists,
the star-spangled gloat of politicians—
O Mammon, come down to us in the form
of Treasuries, Annuities, & High-Grade Bonds,
yield unto us those Benedict Arnold Funds,
those Quicksand Convertible Securities, even the wet
Judas Kiss of Futures Contracts—for
unto the least of these Thy supplicants
art Thou welcome in all Thy many forms. But
when Thou comest to say we're finally in the gentry—
use the service entry.

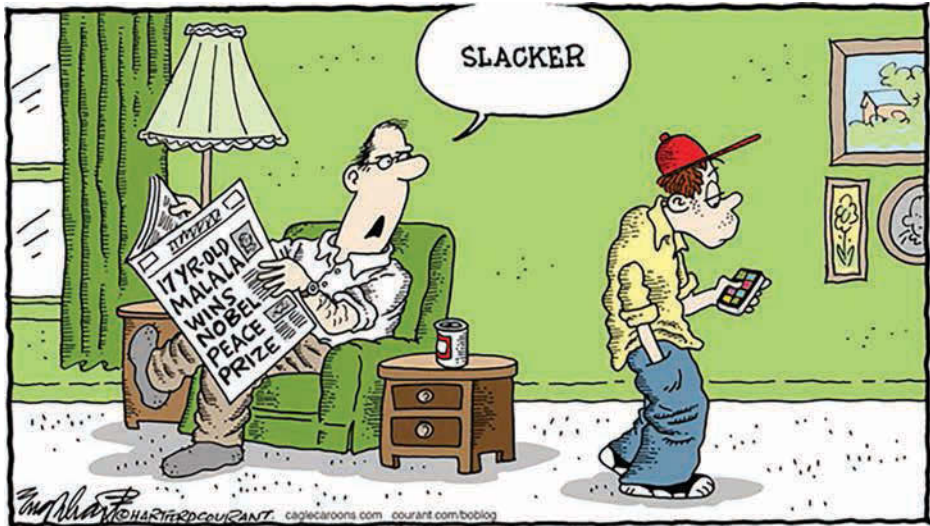
© Philip Appleman.

From the book *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie*



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*.



Overheard

The Secular Student Alliance is interested in what causes suffering and how to stop it. We want to see religious minorities free to express themselves without fear of being marginalized. As a society, how we treat religious minorities is directly related to how we treat people with no religion at all.

Dan Pemberton, SSA campus organizer at Sacramento State, which has 11 Christian clubs

The State Hornet, 10-1-14

[Eric] Shansby and I wrote *Me & Dog* as an antidote to another book, *Heaven Is For Real*, a foul load of phony, credulous, opportunistic crap by a pastor named Todd Burpo, whose son almost died on the operating table and allegedly came back claiming to have met Jesus in heaven. This book was a wild bestseller and became a movie because people really, really want to believe anodyne phony things that make them feel good.

Syndicated columnist Gene Weingarten on the release of his 337-word children's book

The Washington Post, 9-17-14



Are you willing to stand up on a matter of principle and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorneys' fees to make a point based on your personal belief that may or may not align with those of other people in the community?

Mike Looney, Williamson County Schools superintendent, Franklin, Tenn., on a proposal to the school board to replace a moment of silence with prayer

The Tennessean, 10-6-14

I believe the prayer chain gave God the power to answer my prayers. It was as if they had all been caught up in the rapture and the rapture brought them back.

Ginger Middleton, Evans Mills, N.Y., crediting prayer for the return after two days of her 28 goats (including four milkers), which had wandered off from the barn

Watertown Daily Times, 10-18-14

I feel like the last man on Earth who opposes man-man marriage. Besides, the sanctity of traditional marriage is not some fad. You can't pray away your gay. Well, you can't gay away my pray. For Christians like me, this is a civil rights issue in that I don't like gay people getting civil rights.

Stephen Colbert (with tongue in cheek), on the Supreme Court's refusal to hear appeals of decisions legaliz-

ing same-sex marriage

"The Colbert Report," 10-8-14

The Bishop was a man who knew the marriage was in trouble and, instead of trying to help, he began writing love letters to this woman. It is an abuse of his position and a betrayal of his friendship with both her and her husband, who[m] he christened into the church four years ago.

Simon Hodgkinson, a banker whose wife Olivia had an affair with British Catholic Bishop Kieran Conry, who resigned after details of the affair and previous ones with adult women came out

The Guardian, 10-12-14

You have the opportunity to defy the federal judge and the lackey state officials that are doing [Judge Barbara Crabb's] bidding in order to defend what is right and good. Your interposition is needed and necessary.

Letter from anti-abortion activist Matthew Trehwella, pastor of Mercy Seat Christian Church in West Allis, urging Wisconsin county clerks to not to issue marriage licenses to gays

Isthmus, Madison, Wis., 10-14-14

Honestly, in Senate, we were divided on whether we should have prayer at all or whether we should have nonsectarian prayer or sectarian prayer.

Nicki Taylor, Student Government Association president at Western Kentucky University, on the defeat of a resolution to have nonsectarian prayer at meetings

College Heights Herald, 10-14-14

People can criticize politics, sports, cultural phenomena, but we've found that it's culturally taboo to criticize religious belief, so we want to become part of the public discussion on difficult topics dealing with belief.

Ben Makansi, Atheist and Agnostic Students Society at Columbia University, New York

brwog.com, 10-16-14

Would we tolerate a group like this standing by the entrance where you go to get HIV-tested? Or more basically, would we tolerate a group that was saying prayers for people that need to have cardiac catheterization because their behavior led to them needing the procedure? I can see no difference between the two. Both are procedures to improve the lives of the ones seeking this health service. It's legal, and it is safe. And it should stay that way.

Steinunn Rögnvaldsdóttir, sociologist and gender studies expert, on Catholics' regular abortion protests in Iceland at a hospital

The Grapevine, 10-16-14



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

FFRF awards grad/older student essayists \$8,550

FFRF congratulates the seven currently enrolled student winners in its annual essay contest for graduate students to age 30 and undergrads ages 25-30. They were asked to write about "Why 'Religious Liberty' does not mean the right to impose your religion on others."

The competition is generously endowed by Brian Bolton, a Lifetime Member who is a retired psychologist, humanist minister and professor emeritus at the University of Arkansas. Scholarships totaled \$8,550.

First place (\$3,000): Alex Flitter,



Brian Bolton

Rutgers University.

Second place (\$2,000): Kat Heiden,

Gonzaga University.

Third place (\$1,000): Justin Clark, Purdue University.

Fourth place (\$750): Zachary Tuck, California College of the Arts.

Fifth place: (\$500): Benjamin van Loon, Northeastern Illinois University.

Sixth place (tie, \$400 each): Jared Plotkin, California State University-Los Angeles, Ashley Reynolds, Oklahoma State University-Stillwater.

"We congratulate these students for analyzing what is wrong with the theocrats' newest strategy to undermine true religious liberty in the United

States," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

FFRF has three annual essay competitions. Earlier this year, FFRF awarded \$10,250 to a total of 16 college-bound high school graduates and \$12,550 to a total of 21 college students. FFRF would also like to extend a special thanks to Dorea and Dean Schramm in Florida for providing each student who is a member of a secular campus group a \$100 bonus. The total of \$8,550 reflects bonuses.

Read winning essays on pages 8-11.

FFRF welcomes 29 Lifetime Members, new 'After-Lifer'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation gratefully announces a new "After-Life Member," Robert Lawson. The "After-Life" Membership is a \$5,000 membership category, which is slightly tongue in cheek: "for those who want their membership to live after them." FFRF is also honored to announce 29 new Lifetime Members have signed up since the October Freethought Today issue. They are:

Jonathan Blum, Robert Connor, Judith Dunn, Margaret Elizares, James Gellerman, Linda Joan Gould, Andy Green, Dr. Jason Alan Griggs, Donald Ray Hamilton, Lonnie House, Eric Lawrence, Edmond Mercier, Sue Mercier, Konrad Michels, John Mosley, Mike Northrop, Anne Ozment, Guy Quesenberry, Mark Robbins, Daniel E Shaw, Elaine Stone, Mark Troyer and Wayne Varner.

Additionally, Dr. Harold Saferstein has gifted Lifetime Memberships to Tim Bedient, Gary Henderson and Amanda Morton. Other Lifetime Membership gifts came from Todd Peissig, an FFRF Executive Board Member, to

Eric Lawrence; Joe Creager gifted Kyle Creager and Dr. Sandra Snow gifted Dr. Robert Guthrie.

New Lifer Sue Mercier was lead plaintiff in FFRF's successful challenge of a Ten Commandments monument in a La Crosse, Wis., city park. Edmond is her son.

Thanks to Anne Ozment for pledging her Lifetime Membership through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Eighteen locations are represented: Arizona, Armed Forces Europe, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin.

Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000. Like the "After-Life" Membership, they ensure no more renewal notices, are deductible for income-tax purposes and go into rainy-day reserves.

FFRF extends its warmest thanks to these very generous members for their dedication and commitment to FFRF's work to promote freethought and secular government.



Photo: Andrew Seidel

The existing Freethought Hall, left, connects with the impressive new structure.

New addition gets finishing touches outside and in

Thank you all!

All donations small and large are making possible FFRF's exciting five-story building expansion. The staff is eager to move into their new offices in the addition (awaiting lights, phones and electricity, final paint, carpet, cabinets, etc.). A move-in date sometime before the new year is expected. Phase II, which will include renovation of the existing building, will continue into 2015.

Below are Building Fund donations received from Oct. 6 through Nov. 9. It is not cumulative except for the total.

Donors are not identified by name unless giving express permission. Vestibule tile sale will conclude by the end of the year and engraved paving stone availability will end early next year. Watch a fun video of the building going up put together by Andrew Seidel with help from Lauryn Seering, and another video of artist Birgit Bach creating tiles by hand:

ffrf.org/donate/donate-to-ffrf-building-fund

Leslie Biggs, Florida, \$5,000
Anonymous, Georgia, \$5,000
Nicholas Sargeantson, Connecticut, \$3,000
Richard Christenson, Wisconsin, \$1,000
Yair Harel, California, \$1,000
Cleo Kocol, California, \$1,000

Michael Machula, Indiana, \$1,000
Anonymous, Washington, \$1,000
Mary Naff, California, \$1,000
Sharon and Lanny Peissig, Wisconsin, \$1,000
Jack Simpson, Wisconsin, \$1,000
Anonymous, Ohio, \$500
Garnik Patatanian, Oklahoma, \$200
Theresa Durkee, Michigan, \$100
Anonymous, New York, \$100
Susan Paddock, Wisconsin, \$100
Ed and Waneta Sweeney, Ohio, \$100
Donald Weller, Oregon, \$100
Howard Goldsmith, Massachusetts, \$50
Tom Hancock, Colorado, \$50
Stefanie Moritz and Vince Jenkins, Wisconsin, \$50
Alice M Kachman, Michigan, \$40
Edward Fairchild, Texas, \$20
Anonymous, Virginia, \$10
David and Julie McFarlin, Missouri, \$6.66

Subtotal: \$22,426.66

New Cumulative Total: \$1,994,989.12
Goal: \$2 million

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

Overheard

I think my values are expressed in my music, and that's because I try to write honestly. As far as what I believe: What it boils down to is that I'm a humanist. We're all we've got. People can solve people-made problems.

Atheist musician Jeremy Messersmith, interview

Religion News Service, 10-20-14

[The Supreme Court] has been more concerned with the effect of prayer on children. Even though the court has taken a more permissive approach lately, it's unlikely they would accept this.

Kermit Roosevelt, University of Pennsylvania Law School constitutional law professor, on FFRF's complaint about a Delaware high school football coach, who's also dean of students, praying



with players

delmarvanow.com, 10-17-14

Smut in Jesusland: Why Bible Belt States Are the Biggest Consumers of Online Porn

Headline on an op-ed by Valerie Tarico, author, social commentator and former evangelical

Institute for Ethics & Emerging Technologies, 10-17-14

Fighting for the rights of the few isn't always popular, as was learned last week. And while it isn't popular with many of our readers and our community, the right decision was made to stop coached locker room prayers before Central High School football games.

South Dakota newspaper editorial board, on a recent complaint filed by FFRF

Aberdeen American News, 10-14-14

Meet an Atlanta member



Sally Mitchell with husband Harold Mann.

Name: Sally Dean Mitchell.

Where I was born and live: Fayetteville, Tenn., 1940. I've lived in Atlanta since 1970.

Family: Married happily to Harold Mann, another longtime FFRF member. He is 86 and has a terrific collection of humanist books.

Education: B.S. and M.A. in education from Peabody Teachers College, Nashville; graduate work at Columbia University, New York City.

Occupation: Teacher in public and private schools from 3-year-olds to college student. In the 1960s, I taught for seven years at Punahou School in Honolulu (President Obama was a 10-year-old there two years after I left in 1969). In the mid-'80s, I owned and directed my own preschool called Children First. I trained teachers for Head Start. Since 1997, I've taught piano, drawing and sewing in my home stu-

dio.

How I got where I am today: My primary family believed strongly in education, which set my destiny, I suppose. I have lots of friends and mentors who have influenced me.

Where I'm headed: Continuing to love life, learning to draw and paint better, to be a more effective teacher and more tolerant person.

Person in history I admire: Ric Masten, deceased, American humanist poet, musician, philosopher.

A quotation I like: "Variety's the very spice of life." (British poet William Cowper)

These are a few of my favorite things: Dogs, wolves, books, fabric (I have a huge stash for my art quilts), drawing animals (including a cardinal for FFRF's newest winter solstice card).

Pet peeves: Being called a guy, as in "you guys."



FFRF's newest winter solstice card features Sally's fine artwork.

My doubts about religion started: In high school, studying Latin and then Greek and Roman mythology. Those god-to-mortal matings!

Before I die: I'd like to share more of my art and love of life.

Ways I promote freethought: Since I rely on students and their parents for my career, I have to be cautious being outspoken as a humanist, although in my adult groups (not income-related), I am "coming out." Harold and I have loved attending several FFRF and humanist national and regional conventions.

I wish you had asked me: How full

my life is. Very! I'm proud of teaching children since 1962, being elected Teacher of the Year at a large private school, buying a home as a single person in the mid-1970s, international travel (including two months' independent travel across Europe at age 49), editing a 300-page Unitarian Universalist cookbook, having three solo shows of my art quilts, directing/producing two different programs of Edgar Lee Masters' "Spoon River Anthology" at UU services, writing and directing a service about poet Ric Masten (with a cast of 23) and having my artwork on an FFRF solstice card!

FFRF Legal Complaints

FFRF contests public agency chaplaincies

FFRF's latest objection in a series of complaints about law enforcement chaplaincies went to the Orlando (Fla.) Police Department on Nov. 3. Orlando chaplains, as is typical, are required to be ordained ministers who counsel employees, their families and crime victims and assist with death notifications and other activities.

So far this year, FFRF has sent 14 letters of complaint about such chaplaincies, surpassing the past two years' totals combined. Most have gone to public agencies in the South: three to Georgia and four to Florida. Many cities and counties are launching new chaplain programs, said FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, who has handled the bulk of the complaints. One involved a fire department.

FFRF's letter explain that courts allow government-employed chaplains only as an accommodation where the government makes it difficult for people to seek out private ministries, as is the case with military service members or prisoners. Since there is no government-imposed religious burden on law enforcement officers or the public, the government does not need to provide chaplains.

"Favoring religious officers with free, on-the-job counseling while ignoring the needs of those of no faith is discriminatory," Seidel noted. "If chaplains were adept at providing secular therapy, they would be therapists,

not chaplains. There is no reason to think a nonbelieving employee would be comfortable dealing with a person who provides comfort from a religious viewpoint."

There are few court decisions or laws governing law enforcement chaplaincies, which perhaps explains why agencies try to stonewall FFRF. Orlando Police Chief John Mina emailed back the day after receiving FFRF's letter, saying, "I have no intention of discontinuing our Chaplain Program," but failed to cite any law or decision permitting it to continue.

FFRF again takes on pulpit politicking

Before the Nov. 4 general election, FFRF provided the Internal Revenue Service with nine complaints about churches improperly endorsing or opposing candidates for political office. FFRF is investigating more complaints that came to light after that.

FFRF in August voluntarily dismissed its high-profile federal lawsuit against the IRS, challenging its failure to enforce its own electioneering restrictions against churches. FFRF dismissed its suit after the IRS indicated that it had resumed flagging churches involved with political intervention. FFRF may refile the suit if there is evidence the IRS has resumed looking the other way when tax-exempt churches violate the law.

Many complaints stem from pastors who purposely violate restrictions as



FFRF's open records request asks for documents related to the Orlando Police Department's chaplain's car.

part of "Pulpit Freedom Sunday," an annual event put on by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian Right law firm. Many pastors, at the urging of ADF, have sent videos of their law-breaking sermons directly to the IRS, hoping to incite a legal challenge to rescind the 1954 law against politicking by 501c3 churches. According to ADF, more than 1,700 pastors participated in Pulpit Freedom Sunday in October.

Pastors reported to the IRS by FFRF include Skyline Church Pastor Jim Garlow of La Mesa, Calif. In a sermon, Garlow described a letter sent by some Christian Right groups to Republican leadership opposing certain Republican candidates across the country, including Carl DeMaio, running for California's 52nd Congressional District. DeMaio is gay. Garlow encouraged his parishioners to go one step further and vote for DeMaio's Democratic opponent as part of what he called "de-

fensive tactical voting." DeMaio lost by about 5,000 votes.

Other flagrant violations have come in the form of "sample ballots" provided by churches with "suggested candidates" filled in or highlighted. Legacy Church in Albuquerque, N.M., handed out such ballots to parishioners along with actual campaign materials for certain candidates. Three candidates were also introduced during the church's Oct. 11 service.

Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Fla., set out "Conservative Primary Ballots" in August. The ballots indicated how liberal or conservative each candidate was judged to be, placing stars next to the most conservative candidate in each race. Several other religious groups were reported for posting campaign signs on their property. Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert handled those complaints.

It Pays to Complain

Schools get 'civics lesson' on prayer

Coaches at Cape Henlopen High School in Lewes, Del., and Piedmont High School in Piedmont, Ala., will no longer lead their players in prayer or participate in students' prayers.

Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell wrote to the Cape Henlopen School District on Oct. 8 after receiving a report that the high school football coaches participated in a team prayer circle: "While students may wish to engage in prayer on their own, school staff, including coaches, cannot participate in or encourage such religious activities."

In an Oct. 17 response, Superintendent Robert Fulton told FFRF he had discussed the matter with the administration and football coach, and said "employees, including coaches, will be reminded of laws involving the Separation of Church and State."

In a similar violation, Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert first wrote to Piedmont City Schools in March about Piedmont High's unconstitutional practice of starting football games with prayer broadcast over the loudspeaker.

After several follow-up letters, Superintendent Matt Akin emailed Markert last summer: "Beginning immediately, the Piedmont City School District will no longer allow student-led prayer at athletic events."

The complaint made news again in October after Piedmont High School posted a message on its Facebook page informing the public of its decision. Noting that FFRF had cited numerous Supreme Court cases in its letter, the post said, "While the personal opinions of the administration and employees of the system may differ with the opinions of the Court and the author of the letter sent to the system, the school system's attorneys advised that we consent since there is established case law regarding this issue."

"It's a lesson in civics," said Principal Adam Clemons, who manages the school Facebook page. "Sometimes the courts make decisions that we may

or may not agree with, but we have to abide by those decisions."

Tamara Woodard told the Anniston Star that she supports the Christian prayer. "I was surprised that anybody even complained about it our community."

Her husband, Joe Woodard, said he's also Christian but disagreed with her. "Now there are so many diverse religious groups that go to our school," he said, adding that no member of any one religious group should be subjected to the prayers of another group. "It would not be right for a Christian in the crowd to be subjected to a Muslim or a Jewish prayer."

While officially a moment of silence was announced at Piedmont's Oct. 24 game, many in the crowd broke the silence by reciting the Lord's Prayer in unison.

FFRF employs five staff attorneys and a legal fellow and has sent out more than 800 formal letters of complaint over state/church violations so far in 2014. Public school violations accounted for the greatest majority of letters. FFRF has halted over 150 state/church violations this year, including 13 related to prayer in public school athletics.

FFRF stills middle school prayer

Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School in Honolulu will no longer allow a partner organization to pray with students after getting an Oct. 31 FFRF complaint letter.

The school holds "Family Reading for Success" events regularly. An attendee informed FFRF that a recent meeting opened with a sectarian prayer initiated by a nonprofit organization, Kula No Na Poe Hawaii, that partners with the school for the events.

"It is unlawful for any school-sponsored event, such as a meeting dedicated to student literacy, to include prayer," wrote Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel in a letter to the state Department of Education.



At left and right are FFRF Staff Attorneys Elizabeth Cavell and Andrew Seidel, with Marilyn Townsend of the Dane County (Wis.) Bar Association and FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert in between. FFRF staff on Oct. 14 brought about 60 attendees up to speed on the current status of state/church separation issues during their continuing legal education program.

ment of Education.

The school's principal responded the same day to say that he had followed up with Kula No Na Poe Hawaii and reminded them that all school-sponsored events must remain prayer-free.

Religious assembly canceled in Texas

School administrators at Azle (Texas) ISD canceled an assembly set for Oct. 29 after getting an FFRF complaint letter. The assembly was to be presented by Seven at Schools, which is affiliated with the religious ministry Youth Alive North Texas, a "strategic outreach organization that maintains the vision of reaching every student in every school across the region and beyond with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ," according to its website.

Although the group claimed that the assembly would have no religious content, a Seven at Schools representative told FFRF's complainant that the personal stories in the presentation "would include religious themes, including discussion of God."

Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent the district a letter Oct. 28 asking the district to ensure the presentation would be secular.

Acting on the advice of counsel, the district took even stronger action to ensure students would not be proselytized and canceled the assembly entirely, according to local news reports. Seven at Schools representatives gave a religious talk to Azle community members at a church that night.

Good news: Good News unlinked

Greater Albany Public Schools in Oregon will no longer give preferential treatment to the Good News Club over other after-school groups. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent the district a complaint Sept. 11.

The district partners with community groups for early release day programs, including a community program, Boys and Girls Club and the Good News Club, a Christian organization. Seidel pointed out that the district's link to the Good News website linked directly to its registration forms but instructed parents to contact other organizations directly to register. The club's forms were also sent home with students the first week of school and

made available at schools and were to be turned in to the school office. Fliers from other groups weren't distributed.

"By extensively coordinating the Good News Club's signup, the district is providing a benefit to the club that it does not afford other secular programs," Seidel wrote.

The complaint was forwarded to FFRF from its Portland chapter. Cheryl Kolbe, chapter president, said Oct. 29 that the website had been modified so that parents were instructed to contact the Good News Club directly for registration like the other groups.

Adults warned to back off prayer

Adults will no longer participate in religious activities at Bath High School in Lima, Ohio. Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Oct. 16 to Bath Local Schools after a local complainant forwarded a media profile of the school's "team chaplain," who, along with coaches, prayed with students.

Superintendent Dale Lewellen responded Oct. 23: "I recognized that the constitutional line may have been crossed and have taken appropriate steps to ensure it will not recur. Religious proselytization and/or participation by staff in their school capacities are not consistent with my aim to comply with applicable constitutional and statutory requirements."

Mizzou U. cancels church discount

The University of Missouri agreed that a church bulletin discount offered as part of a volleyball ticket promotion was inappropriate, said the school's director of athletics in response to an Oct. 16 letter from Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell.

A university employee informed FFRF that free admission was offered to the Sept. 28 game with a church bulletin as part of "Faith and Family Day."

Cavell noted that the discount violated the federal Civil Rights Act, Missouri statute and raised Establishment Clause concerns.

Director of Athletics Michael Alden responded the next day, agreeing that the discount was "not consistent with our department's practices and that we stopped the promotion from being carried out as described in the materials."



Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter of complaint Oct. 7 to the Manchester (Iowa) Police Department, prompting removal of this poster in its lobby. FFRF's local complainant called on Oct. 21 to report that the poster was gone.

Brian L. Bolton Graduate Essay Contest winner

Their ‘religious liberty’ infringes on us

FFRF awarded Alex \$3,000 for his first-place essay.



By Alex Flitter

I got my first job when I was 13, a camp counselor job, looking after children not much younger than me for far below minimum wage. I thought I had a solid understanding of the employer-employee relationship. Employees are hired to fulfill tasks that the employer needs completed. In return, the employee receives pay and possibly benefits. That’s where I thought the relationship ended. But since then, a transformation has occurred involving “religious liberty.” What used to mean the right to believe or not to believe in any religion you

choose now appears to mean the right to impose what you believe on individuals over whom you have power. Despite the claim that this is a Christian nation by partisan historians who believe the founders abhorred state/church separation, the Establishment Clause is clear. It prohibits an official state religion, including favoring one religion over others or supporting religion over irreligion. It’s a clear indication of how important religious neutrality was to the founders. How did we get from the Establishment Clause to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act? In 1990, the Supreme Court ruled in *Employment Division v. Smith*, a case in which two Native Americans in Oregon were fired after consuming peyote, ostensibly for religious reasons. After the court validated the firings, Congress passed RFRA in 1993. It states that the government can’t “substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification.” It notes that it can burden religious exercise if it is done to further a “compelling interest” and is done using “the least restrictive means.” This history and legislation came to a head in the recent Supreme Court case *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties sought an exemption from the Affordable Care Act’s mandate that health plans cover all birth control methods approved by the Food and Drug Administration, citing the owners’ religious beliefs and RFRA. The court in a 5-4 decision found that closely held corporations could withhold benefits from employees due to religious beliefs. Justice Samuel Alito wrote in the majority opinion that the contraceptive mandate was a “substantial burden” to the owners. He interpreted

The only hindrance is to a woman’s right to reproductive freedom.

RFRA to pertain to “humans who own and control corporations,” despite the fact that nothing in the Act indicates that it was ever supposed to facilitate the imposition of one’s beliefs on others. I keep trying to get into the mind of a religious multimillionaire, to feel the “great burden” he’s supposedly feeling. I don’t doubt the sincerity, but the burden is nonexistent, and I can only conclude that these owners are simply trying to impose their beliefs on as many people as they can. They believe that contraception, including the morning-after pill, is equivalent to abortion (physiology disagrees). Their argument is that providing this benefit substantially burdens their religious exercise without compelling justification, to paraphrase RFRA. Except providing full health insurance coverage is not burdening them. They can still pray as they choose and abstain from contraception if they morally disagree with it. They don’t even have to offer health plans to their employees, but could instead pay a tax. The most important point is that whether or not a woman chooses to use contraception in no way hinders the employer’s ability to practice their religion. The only hindrance is to a woman’s right to reproductive freedom.

There could be more of the same on the way. With President Obama recently announcing an executive order that bans federal contractors from discriminating against gay people in the hiring process, 14 faith leaders urged Obama in a letter to exempt religious groups. These leaders, some of whom have spiritually advised Obama, cited the need to respect different opinions on sexuality and claimed that the social services they provide will suffer without an exemption. But of course, this had nothing to do with social services. This was a blatant case of people in a position of power desperately trying to impose their beliefs on the government and the American people. Their religion dictates that homosexuality is a sin, so they asked the president to impose their beliefs and allow workplace discrimination to continue on our dime. As I continue my education in hopes of one day being employed, I wonder what my future employer will ask of me in the name of his or her religion. What if my employers are devout Christian Scientists and I get diagnosed with cancer? Will I be forced to pay for chemotherapy because my employer genuinely believes that relying on modern medicine instead of prayer is a sin? With the Supreme Court’s *Hobby Lobby* decision and the pervasiveness of this new form of “religious liberty,” I can only guess whose beliefs will be dictating what parts of my life.

Alex Flitter, 25, Cherry Hill N.J., graduated magna cum laude from Rutgers University in 2012 with a bachelor’s in psychology and is pursuing a master’s in psychology at Rutgers.

Second place: Graduate/mature student essay contest

SCOTUS: All freedom not created equal

FFRF awarded Kat \$2,000 for her essay.

By Kat Heiden

The New York Times headline sums it up nicely: “Supreme Court Rejects Contraceptive Mandate for Some Corporations.” Within this straightforward statement lies an important key word: “Some” suggests that the court’s decision applies to certain companies with certain characteristics. In this case that defining characteristic is the business owners’ religious beliefs. The court’s decision ensures that these individuals’ religious preferences are maintained. In doing so, it violates the freedom of countless female employees by preventing them from accessing the contraception that, per the Affordable Care Act, they have

a legal right to obtain. The *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* decision suggests that religious freedom is somehow more valuable than workers’ freedom to make decisions about their own health and futures. That alone is a fatal flaw in the decision, but there are several others. In a country where we pride ourselves on “liberty and justice for all,” the decision applies that liberty selectively, with religious business owners as its “chosen” people. If religious employers refuse to include contraception as part of employee health plans, many women can no longer make a choice about whether or not to obtain it. They are stripped of this freedom because without insurance, contraception can be prohibitively expensive. For example, according to Planned Parenthood, an intrauterine device (one of the most effective forms of birth control) can cost \$500 to \$900 if paid for entirely out

of pocket. For a woman making minimum wage, as many workers at retail stores such as Hobby Lobby earn, this could mean nearly a month’s wages. A woman’s choice to obtain birth control does not infringe on anyone else’s freedom. No one will be forced to use birth control. Before, during and after the woman’s choice, the freedom to practice religion will remain intact. Disturbingly, the decision suggests that the imposition of one’s religious beliefs on others is a freedom to be protected. *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* not only applies the concept of freedom unequally, it relies heavily on the idea of corporate personhood to underscore its religious favoritism. As Justice Ruth Ginsburg noted in her dissent, “the court’s expansive notion of corporate personhood invites for-profit entities to seek religion-based exemptions from regulations they deem offensive to their faiths.”

A woman’s choice to obtain birth control does not infringe on anyone else’s freedom.

The majority opinion justifies corporate personhood by stating: Congress provided protection for people like the Hahns and Greens by employing a familiar legal fiction: It included corporations within RFRA’s definition of “persons.” But it is important to keep in mind that the purpose of this fiction is to provide protection

for human beings. A corporation is simply a form of organization used by human beings to achieve desired ends. An established body of law specifies the rights and obligations of the people (including shareholders, officers, and employees) who are associated with a corporation in one way or another. When rights, whether constitutional or statutory, are extended to corporations, the purpose is to protect the rights of these people.

The above passage shows selective freedom at work. The majority defines “people” as shareholders, officers and employees and justifies corporate personhood as a way to protect those people’s rights. Yet the employee’s right to contraception is denied. By treating employers differently from employees, the court adheres to only a select portion of its own corporate personhood definition.

The Supreme Court is a public body whose purpose is to better define, interpret and apply law in service of all Americans. It cannot select which Americans it serves. In principle, the court makes our country freer by ensuring that all laws are just. *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* does not strike down an unjust law or create a new one. It simply chooses the application of one existing law over another. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act is favored over the Affordable Care Act.

In a more egregious misappropriation of the court’s power to apply the law, RFRA is also essentially chosen over the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause. Justice Ginsburg speaks to this point in her dissent:

The Court does not pretend that the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause demands religion-based accommodations so extreme, for our decisions leave no

doubt on that score. Instead, the Court holds that Congress, in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, dictated the extraordinary religion-based exemptions [to the Free Exercise Clause] today’s decision endorses.

Decisions like *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* favor some Americans’ freedoms over others, which is extremely problematic. Freedom is the core belief that unites our United States, and it is too precious to be dispensed unevenly, especially by the highest court in the land.

Kat Heiden, 29, Sherman Oaks, Calif., is pursuing an M.A. in communications and leadership from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash. She previously earned a B.A. in screenwriting from Chapman University in Orange, Calif.



Kat Heiden

Third place: Graduate/mature student essay contest

Disquieting decision: *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*

FFRF awarded Justin \$1,000 for his essay.



By Justin Clark

The Supreme Court made a decision on June 30 that will be remembered for its uneven handling of justice and as a serious challenge to the secular institutions that have sustained the U.S. for over 230 years: *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores Inc.*

For-profit corporations now have a “religious privilege” to not conform to the contraceptive coverage mandate as outlined in the Affordable Care Act. For the first time, personal religious rights have been conferred on for-profit corporations. Owners of “closely held” companies can impose their religious beliefs on their employees.

As New York Times reporter Adam Liptak noted, the decision has “opened the door to many challenges from corporations over laws that they claim violate their religious liberty.” That understates the case. Over 90% of all U.S. businesses are “closely held,” which means that while the majority opinion sees this as a narrow ruling, it actually applies the challenges to the ACA to corporate law as a whole.

In effect, a private company can now challenge almost any law on “religious liberty” grounds. This terrible decision is not at all what the framers envisioned

This terrible decision is not at all what the framers envisioned with the Establishment Clause.

with the Establishment Clause. The decision stems from the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which, in the wake of the 2010 *Citizens United* decision, has been appropriated to serve the ends of religious business owners who run entities such as Hobby Lobby.

Equally troubling is that at no time in the majority opinion does Justice Samuel Alito even remotely define what “deeply held religious beliefs” are or how they allow corporations to discriminate against workers. He only intimates that “it is not for the Court to say that the religious beliefs of the plaintiffs are mistaken or unreasonable.” While the explicit remark of the majority is certainly logical, based on the

Establishment Clause, it is the implicit meaning that is deeply unsettling.

The court has indirectly decided that the religious beliefs of the majority shareholders of a company trump employees’ rights. Picking and choosing who’s burdened or helped by RFRA sets an awful precedent, and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s dissent elucidates this beautifully:

No doubt the Greens . . . and all who share their beliefs may decline to acquire for themselves the contraceptives in question. But that choice may not be imposed on employees who hold other beliefs. Working for Hobby Lobby or Conestoga, in other words, should not deprive employees of the preventive care available to workers at the shop next door, at least in the absence of directions from the Legislature or Administration to do so.

That outlines perfectly the problematic aspect of this decision. The Establishment Clause mandates strict neutrality in religious matters, but because of the ruling’s broadening of RFRA, the government is now effective-

ly picking winners and losers based on “deeply held religious beliefs.” This is corporate encroachment on individual liberties and protections, done in the name of religious liberty. It opens the floodgates for cases all over the country.

Secularism requires a position of neutrality, because the complications of defining a deeply held religious belief are astounding. RFRA should be amended or repealed altogether. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties should not have even been allowed to pursue a claim against forms of contraception in the first place.

Calling contraception such as intrauterine devices the moral equivalent of abortion is not a position that the Supreme Court should decide, but it has done so at the expense of individual rights. This decision is dangerous, and future cases will make it only more so.

Justin Clark, 24, Peru, Ind., is pursuing a master’s in public history at Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis. He previously earned a bachelor’s in history/political science with a minor in philosophy from Indiana University-Kokomo.

Fourth place: Graduate/mature student essay contest

Corporate personhood’s oppression by religion

FFRF awarded Zachary \$750 for his essay.

By Zachary Tuck

The First Amendment states in part, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The amendment expressed the Enlightenment-era philosophy of reason

espoused by many of the Constitution’s framers. The Establishment Clause also appealed to people who had faced religious persecution in Europe.

The ongoing clash between science and religion and the growth of corporate personhood complicate the issue of religious freedom in a way not anticipated 200 years ago. Corporate religious expression has devastating consequences for women, LGBTQ persons and other minorities. The concomitant

erosion of the separation of church and state lets corporations legislate from the board room, circumventing legal precedent to create biased hiring practices and control their employees’ and customers’ access to health, safety and freedom from persecution under the guise of religious expression.

The exercise of free speech has been the battleground for corporate personhood. Corporations have a vest-
Continued on next page

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ed interest in removing any limits to political donations, which gives them greater clout than any human person, paving the way for decisions like *Citizens United* and *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*.

The social movements of the 20th century, most notably the civil rights and women’s rights movements, created a fairer and broader definition of what it is to be human. One such source of power is the idea of bodily autonomy, which was advanced by the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* carries with it the implication that a corporation can use a religion to make a medical definition, which thus becomes not only a public health concern, but a threat to women’s rights.

In “The Hobby Lobby Decision: A Summary & Explanation,” the blogger known as Carmen breaks down one of the most insidious aspects of the majority decision by exploring a quote from Justice Samuel Alito: “The owners of the businesses have religious objections to abortion, and according to their religious beliefs the four contraceptive methods at issue are abortifacients.”

Note how carefully Alito words it:



Zachary Tuck

“according to their religious beliefs.” He had to do so because the four contraceptives at issue (Mirena, Paragard, Plan B and Ella) are *not*, in fact, abortifacients according to the FDA. This is really crucial. The court majority wrongly allowed Hobby Lobby to define what causes an abortion.

The court is not solely culpable in this, given that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, passed by Congress, mandates additional safeguards against laws placing an alleged undue burden on the expression of religion, effectively paving the way for the Hobby Lobby case and others like it.

The 21st century has also witnessed the growth of the LGBTQ rights movement, which faces strong religious opposition. Michelle Chen at The Nation has reported on Hobby Lobby’s unwillingness to let a transgender employee of 16 years use her store’s bathroom, despite having legally transitioned. George Fox University, a Christian university in Oregon, applied for and was granted a religious exemption to Title IX requirements to provide appropriate accommodations for one of its transgender students. As the student himself points out in a report by Daniel Borgen:

“I deserve to be treated like the other men on campus. Apparently, the university disagrees, as they have made clear by forcing me to live off-campus. The university is operating under the doctrine of ‘separate but equal,’ and the religious exemption they received now gives the government’s stamp of approval to what they are doing. My own tax dollars will fund the university’s discrimination against me. I don’t understand it and I don’t think it is fair.”

The Supreme Court and the prevailing political climate are strongly biased toward a very loose interpretation

The court majority wrongly allowed Hobby Lobby to define what causes an abortion.

of the free exercise of religion. Each such law passed nationally or locally and supported judicially threatens the Establishment Clause — in word and spirit — and the freedom and safety of individuals and groups.

Those of us who fear the imposition of religion, or impositions in the guise of religion, must fight the symptoms of this problem and face up to the problem itself: That no freedom is safe when corporate interests erode representative government.

Zachary Tuck, 30, Austin, Texas, is a student in the writing and literature program at California College of the Arts in the San Francisco area, working toward a bachelor’s degree.

Fifth place: Graduate/mature student essay contest

Hobby Lobby ruling is vat of worms

FFRF awarded Benjamin \$500 for his essay.

By Benjamin van Loon

The First Amendment recognizes freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of religion. The amendment opens with the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses that state, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Thomas Jefferson summed up the clauses’ implication in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, that they erect “a wall of separation between Church & State.”

On paper, the separation seems like it should work, but two centuries later, the 1791 amendment is still contentious.

Burwell v. Hobby Lobby originated in 2010 in reaction to the Affordable Care Act and its redefinition of employer-based health plans. Under the ACA, the Health Resources and Services Administration determined that FDA-approved contraceptives should be included in these health plans.

Big-box craft chain Hobby Lobby — owned by founder, billionaire and evangelical Christian David Green and his family — has 28,000 employees and objected to coverage for emergency and other contraception which the company has, in the tradition of corporate myopia, erroneously declared to be abortifacients.

This is less like a can and more like a vat of worms. How can a corporation have religious beliefs? Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott addressed the issue in their 2003 documentary “The Corporation,” which investigates cor-

porate personhood through a DSM-IV lens. The movie concludes that corporations are largely psychopathic (socially inept, lacking empathy, deceitful, etc.).

This is not revelatory but it is provocative. We’re led to ask how corporations achieved their personhood. They can merge, acquiesce and sue, but can they go to church?

Hobby Lobby cites the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, suggesting that the government has substantially burdened the company’s exercise of religion.

The “win” in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* is a liberating benefit to corporations, which can leverage “religious” rationale for commercial gain and a detriment to the real persons affected by corporate decisions.

We must also consider how the case fallaciously conflates religious conviction with ethical opinion. Hobby Lobby’s argument reflects the Christian position about conception and contraceptives in general, where the logic is hermeneutically weak and the reasoning duplicitous.

If *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* were truly

Corporations can merge, acquiesce and sue, but can they go to church?

about religious freedom, the \$2.28 billion company would swallow the \$100 a month tax for failing to meet HRSA requirements and we’d hear no more of it. But instead, federal notions of religious liberty get dragged into the muck as Jefferson’s wall gets ever more porous.

Finally, in typical psychopathological fashion, Hobby Lobby fails to recognize that what it does in pursuit of its religious liberty doubles as a religious (ethical and ideological) imposition, beginning with its 28,000 employees and extending to the rest of the conscious public.

If Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, it should recognize that religion ends where it begins: in the head, the



Benjamin van Loon, 29, Chicago, is pursuing a master’s in communication and media at Northeastern Illinois University after graduating magna cum laude from North Park University with degrees in both philosophy and English.

Sixth place (tie): Graduate/mature student essay contest

A haven from oppression

FFRF awarded Ashley \$400 for her essay.

By Ashley Reynolds

United States Constitution, Amendment I: “Congress shall make

no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . .” The reverence given to both aspects of religious liberty by our nation’s founders comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with our colonial history, as the New World served as a haven for the many who sought to escape the oppressive Church of Eng-

land.

Today it would seem that history does repeat itself, as liberty-minded Americans once again find themselves as underdogs in a battle for freedom from religious oppression.

A legislative battle is under way to radically redefine “religious liberty.” By definition, liberty means to have the

greatest degree of freedom possible without infringing on another's rights. Yet the purported religious liberties of some are clashing with the basic rights of others, and these clashes are being legally sanctioned, defying the spirit of the Establishment Clause.

Many states have almost no legal consequences for parents who decline medical treatment for their children in favor of faith-based healing. Similarly, despite the 109-year-old ruling in *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, all but three states grant parents vaccine exemptions on the basis of religion.

Gays and women are subject to ever-increasing discrimination despite constitutional protections. Nine states have what some disrespectfully call "no promo homo" laws denouncing homosexuality. Contradicting *Lawrence v. Texas*, some even criminalize consensual sex between adults.

And, after Arizona's failed attempt to let business owners refuse service to same-sex couples for religious reasons, at least five more states are looking at similar legislation.

Perhaps one recent case stands



Ashley Reynolds

above the rest as a red flag: *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*. In the fall of 2012, Hobby Lobby's owners filed a lawsuit alleging that the Affordable Care Act forced the Green family to act in violation of their beliefs. The Greens falsely claimed that emergency contraceptives like Plan B and Ella, as well as copper and hormonal intrauterine devices, are abortifacients.

On June 30, 2014, the Supreme Court sided 5-4 with Hobby Lobby. In the words of dissenting Justice Ruth

Bader Ginsburg, the majority ventured into a "minefield" by radically expanding the interpretation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 to include corporate personhood.

Within 24 hours, the court issued orders on six similar cases that extended the Hobby Lobby exception to all drugs classified as contraceptives. Within 48 hours, the court issued a procedural ruling in *Wheaton College v. Burwell* that the employer couldn't even be compelled to submit a form to the government stating religious objections to contraceptives, as the mere act of doing so might trigger a third party to provide coverage.

Religious liberty no longer just means a woman has the freedom to choose whether or not to use contraception; it now means a company can choose whether or not to even give her the option.

Burwell is another chip off the decaying façades of *Griswold v. Connecticut* and *Roe v. Wade*, which have been weakened by a string of state laws and court rulings making contraception and abortion less accessible. The Re-

ligious Right is successfully launching attacks on women from a new strategic position. If they can't deny reproductive rights entirely, they will circumvent them by cutting off insurance funding.

America is an idea as much as a nation, the idea being that people are endowed with a basic human right to as much freedom as possible without infringing on others. Our founding documents reflect this desire for liberty, and we are governed by a Constitution that, in no uncertain terms, especially recognizes the importance of religious freedom.

America can return to her roots as a haven from oppression, but we must take this clear stand: One's freedom ends where another's begins.

Ashley Reynolds, 28, Perkins, Okla., is pursuing an M.S. in teaching, learning and leadership with an option in secondary social studies education at Oklahoma State University, where she earned a B.A. in political science in 2010.

Sixth place (tie): Graduate/mature student essay contest

Wall of separation in danger of crumbling

FFRF awarded Jared \$400 for his essay.



By Jared Plotkin

In 2014, the principle of separation of church and state has been challenged in a variety of disturbing ways. Using code words like "religious liberty," Christian conservatives have tried through the legal system to impose their beliefs on everyone.

Hundreds of public schools across the country were shown to be teaching creationism, in defiance of federal rulings. Numerous bills were proposed allowing businesses to turn away gay customers based on the owner's religious beliefs, with one so far, in Mississippi, signed into law.

Most recently, in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, the Supreme Court declared that not only are corporations people, they can be religious people, and that their "freedom of religion" trumps the rights of the actual people who work for the company.

Each of these issues is an egregious constitutional violation. I wish, however, to discuss another development that is in many ways the clearest ex-

ample of the way "religious liberty" has been misused to force one Christianity on the entire nation.

In *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, the Supreme Court ruled that not only could a city council meeting begin with a prayer, but the prayer could be explicitly Christian. The case is notable for several reasons.

The New York town had a history of selecting only Christians to lead the opening prayer. Justice Elena Kagan noted in her dissent: "In arranging for clergy members to open each meeting, the town never sought (except briefly when this suit was filed) to involve, accommodate, or in any way reach out to adherents of non-Christian religions."

The 5-4 decision was also notable for the breakdown among justices. All the justices appointed by Republican presidents (and all Catholic) favored sectarian prayer, while all appointed by Democrats opposed it. The court's split mirrors that of the town's prayer-givers — the Christian majority imposing its views on everyone.

The decision runs afoul of judicial precedent, which is increasingly becoming typical for this court. E.J. Dionne notes that "the court's conservative majority is operating as a political faction" and is willing to embrace an activist role in order to achieve ideological goals.

Precedent like the "Lemon" test, which prohibits government entanglement with religion and ensures that policies involving religion serve a secular purpose, has been swept aside. Even more startling is how the "originalist" conservative justices have ignored the founders' views on state/church separation.

The words of the majority opinion confirm this stunning departure from our roots. Justice Anthony Kennedy opined that the overwhelming majority of prayers were explicitly Christian was because town residents were "nearly all" Christian. Kennedy's solution for those who object: Ignore the prayer or

leave the room.

The agenda of conservatives who claim they want to expand "religious liberty" is revealed. They do not want religious liberty; they want its antithesis. They want to use the government's authority to spread their beliefs to the exclusion of all others at taxpayer expense.

It's no wonder that Justice Clarence Thomas filed a separate opinion with the majority stating that there's nothing in the Constitution barring state and local governments from establishing an official religion.

Prayer at city council meetings might be a small issue, but the logic be-

hind the majority's view is not. Assuming that the court's ideological makeup isn't altered in the near future, this decision could open the floodgates to letting the religious majority force its views on the minority.

Those of us who believe that freedom of religion includes freedom from religion should be outraged.

Jared Plotkin, 28, Sacramento, is pursuing a master's in political science at California State University-Los Angeles, where he's the founding president of the Atheist, Agnostic and Non-Religious Student Alliance. He previously earned a B.A. in political science from UCLA-Irvine.

State/Church Bulletin

Courthouse protest brings arrest

Eliot Kalman, 69, Athens, Ohio, was arrested Oct. 28 and charged with misdemeanor criminal mischief for his protest of the church directory sign on the Athens County Courthouse. Kalman admitted putting stickers advocating state/church separation on the directory, reported the Athens News. The sign lists 40 different churches and religious groups in the county.

County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn said it's his "understanding that the county has no influence or authority over what goes up or how it goes up, and that by going through the [private] group who controls it, anyone can post any group organizational information they want."

Kalman said if something is on county property, it's under the county's authority. He said he's upset about being handcuffed, searched and "perp walked" after what he considers an appropriate public protest. "They put me in handcuffs for exercising my First Amendment rights as if I were a dan-

gerous person."

Atheist settles suit for \$2 million

Barry Hazle Jr. and the state of California settled Hazle's six-year-old civil rights suit on Oct. 14 for almost \$2 million. Hazle was imprisoned for just over 100 days after contesting a "higher power" drug treatment program while he was on parole, the Redding Record Searchlight reported.

Hazle asked for a secular treatment program, was told none was available and was eventually sent back to prison, where he'd already spent a year on drug possession charges that were overturned by an appeals court.

An appeals judge ruled in August 2013 that compensatory damages are mandatory in cases of unconstitutional imprisonment and said the trial jury had been misinstructed, resulting in the settlement. The state will pay Hazle \$1 million and \$925,000 will come from Westcare California Inc., the contractor that offered only a religious rehabilitation program.



Above: Scott Clifton, an daytime Emmy Award-winning actor (currently Liam Cooper on “The Bold and the Beautiful” on CBS). Left: The audience watches a riveting excerpt of Clifton’s atheist YouTube series “Theoretical B.S.”



Rice University professor Anthony Pinn spoke on “How a Good Methodist Became a Better Atheist.”



Above: Jessica Ahlquist, 19, summed up what she learned as Rhode Island’s outcast high school state/church plaintiff and court victor.

Left: FFRF Member Barbara Mancini gave a cautionary speech, “From Accused to Activist,” about her father’s attempt to die with dignity.



Three of FFRF’s staff attorneys, Andrew Seidel, Rebecca Markert and Patrick Elliott, drew appreciative standing-room-only crowds for their workshop reporting on legal activism and media coverage.

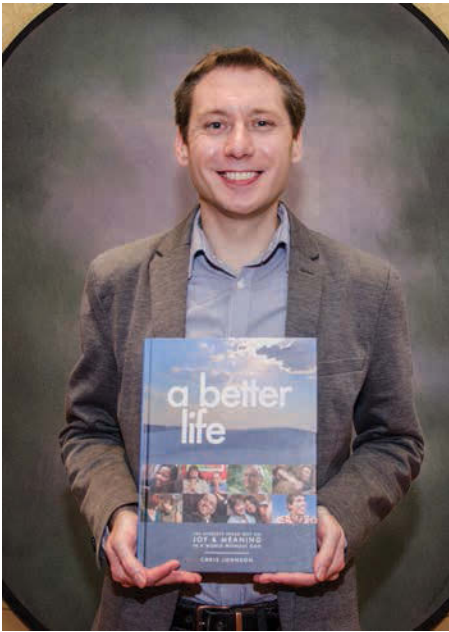
Speakers — FFRF Convention 2014

Millenium Biltmore — Los Angeles, Oct. 24–26

*Photography by
Ingrid Laas*



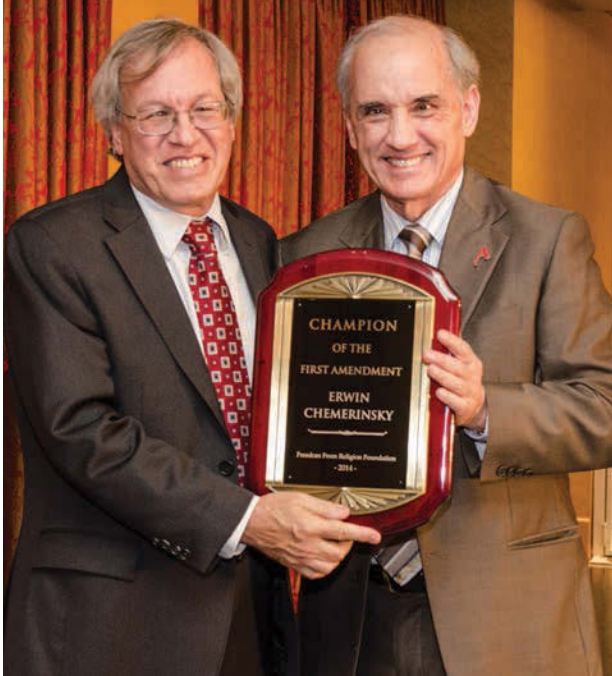
FFRF Co-President Dan Barker entertains at the piano after the banquet.



Talented photographer Chris Johnson sold out of his gorgeous photo book *A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy & Meaning in a World Without God*.



Physicist and author Sean Carroll, holding FFRF’s highest honor, the Emperor Has No Clothes Award.



Professor Erwin Chemerinsky, a “titan” in state/church scholarship, was awarded Champion of the First Amendment by FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.



Anthropologist and author Donald C. Johanson, discoverer of “Lucy,” displays his Emperor Has No Clothes Award.

Honorees



Leading state/church scholar Marci Hamilton received FFRF’s Freethought Heroine Award.



Susan Galloway (left) and Linda Stephens each received Freethinker of the Year awards as the persevering plaintiffs challenging governmental prayer in *Town of Greece v. Galloway and Stephens*.

Photography by Ingrid Laas

‘Nothing Fails Like Prayer’ Winners



Tim Earl with his “Nothing Fails Like Prayer” plaque, awarded on behalf of FFRF by Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott. Tim delivered his atheist invocation to the city council in Portage, Mich.



Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert hands Dan Courtney his “Nothing Fails Like Prayer” plaque. Dan historically gave a secular invocation in the town of Greece, N.Y., site of the Supreme Court challenge of governmental prayer.



Amanda Novotny receives her “Nothing Fails Like Prayer” plaque from Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel for her freethought invocation before the Sioux Falls (S.D.) City Council. The three winners delivered their winning invocations at the convention.

Chapters & Activists

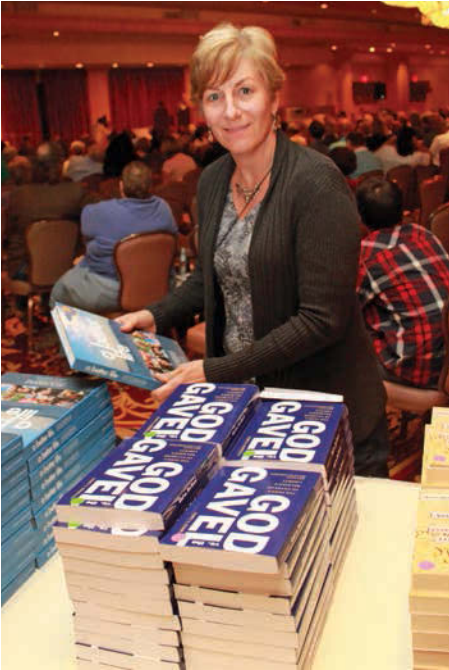


FFRF state representatives Sheridan Chapin and Fairfid Caudle, both New Yorkers.

Photography by Andrew Seidel



Richard L. Bolton, Wisconsin, who has litigated dozens of FFRF lawsuits, including its ongoing IRS challenge of the parish exclusion, introduces honoree Erwin Chermerinsky. Photo: Ingrid Laas



Claudette StPierre, president of FFRF's Denver chapter, browses the book selection.



Steve Trunk, foxhole atheist, California state representative and plaintiff in the longest-lived state/church court case in history, the Mount Soledad cross case in La Jolla.



Mark and Marni Heubner-Tiborsky. Marni is president of the Cleveland-based Northern Ohio Freethought Society, an FFRF chapter. Photo: Ingrid Laas



Enjoying FFRF's Non-Prayer Breakfast and the company were Steve Brady, attorney in FFRF's Orlando schools censorship case, Florida; Steve Salemsen, FFRF's new treasurer, Wisconsin; board member Mike Cermak Jr. with his father Mike Sr., both of Pennsylvania; and Stephen Hirtle, FFRF board chair, Pennsylvania.



Ron Hermesen, founder of Freedom From Religion-Albuquerque, enjoys cake with another convention attendee.



Cheryl Kolbe, president of FFRF Portland Area, and professor Stephen Hirtle, University of Pittsburgh, who chairs FFRF's Executive Board and helped select the Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown for the national convention Oct. 7-9, 2016.



Scott and Beth Taylor, Washington state. Scott was convention videographer. Beth helped staff sales tables.

Convention Staffing



Sam Erickson, president of Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, served as convention IT guy. Buzz Kemper manned the audio.



Bookkeeper Katie Daniel was popular as the staffer who could process credit cards for sales items.



Staff Attorneys Andrew Seidel and Patrick Elliott, with Rebecca Markert (below), put on a popular legal workshop, then helped staff sales tables.



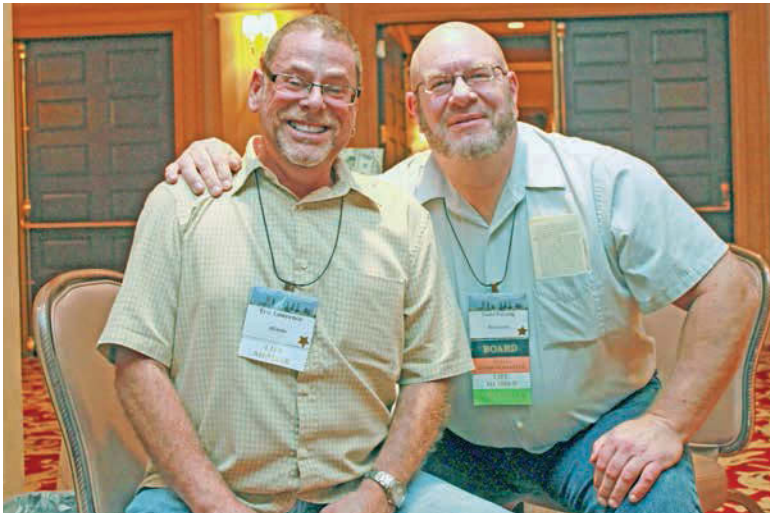
Membership Manager Jackie Douglas and Lisa Strand, director of operations, greeted conventioners and did "yeo-woman's" convention prep.



Photography by Ingrid Laas



Official convention photographer Ingrid Laas waits for Donald C. Johanson's autograph.



Eric Lawrence (left) and FFRF Executive Board Member Todd Peissig, who sold tickets for the annual "clean money" drawing (pre-"In God We Trust" currency from \$1 to \$100). Todd surprised his 15-year partner Eric with a Life Membership at the convention. Photo: Andrew Seidel



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor with steadfast state/church plaintiff Jessica Ahlquist. Photo: Andrew Seidel



Claudia Kellersch Brumley, Calif., loads up on flair and books, including FFRF’s signature “Imagine No Religion” book bag.



FFRF’ers filled the Biltmore Bowl at the elegant Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Chris Johnson, who photographed freethinkers around the world for his book *A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy & Meaning in a World Without God*, shows a photo of Julia and Mulan Sweeney, Julia’s daughter, who are included in the coffee table book.



The audience of over 500 let loose with numerous standing ovations during the 37th annual FFRF convention. Participants were from at least 32 states and three countries besides the U.S.: Canada, Brazil and New Zealand.



Len Eisenberg, Oregon, and Charlene Couch, Maryland, are among the attentive audience. Len and his wife, Karen, also attending, generously endow the annual \$1,000 Thomas Jefferson Student Activist Award and produce those popular evolution T-shirts!

Irreverent Audience

Photography by
Ingrid Laas



Honoree Donald C. Johanson autographs his photo in Chris Johnson’s *A Better Life* for photographer Chris, while activist Jessica Ahlquist waits her turn.

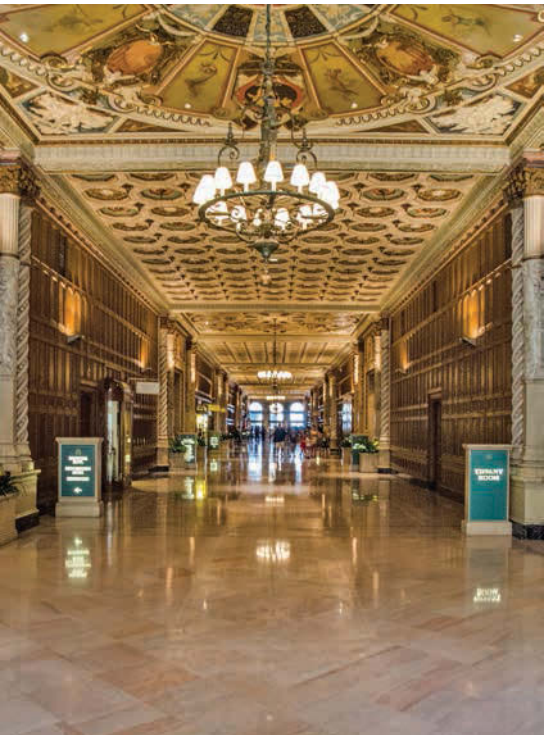


Ngozi Onwurah and her son Kanaya Kuchler, 11, listen intently to speaker Anthony Pinn, author of *Writing God’s Obituary*.



FFRF provided a complimentary afternoon reception in one of the Biltmore’s beautiful areas.

Right: Convention-goers enjoy the spread.



The memorable Millennium Biltmore setting.



Wearing a very cool tie (reading: “Infidel, Non-Believer, Freethinker, Atheist, Heretic”) is Steven Lowe, District of Columbia. Photo: Andrew Seidel

Convention Ambience

Photography by Ingrid Laas

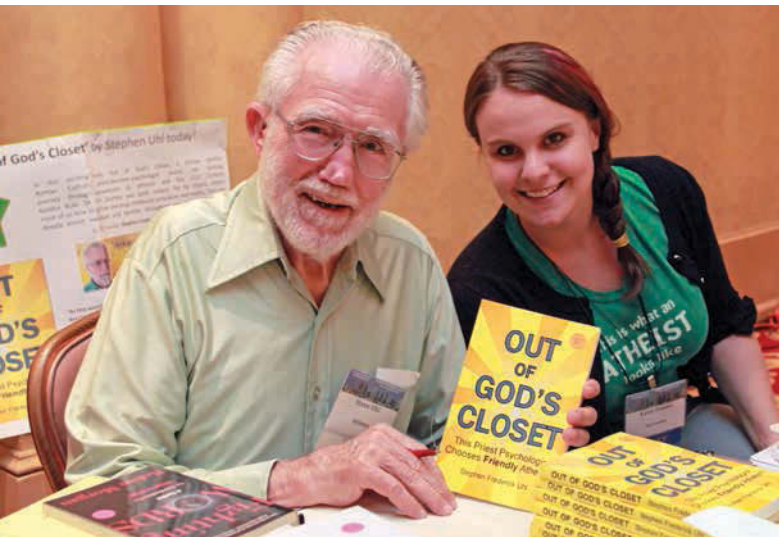
Watch convention slideshows: ffrf.org/convention



The Voices of Reason chorus, affiliated with Atheists United, serenadeS with a soothing 15-minute concert. Warm thanks to chorus members Diego Davidenko, Derek Houck, Christine Jones, Erin Keith, Amanda MacLean, Jeff Mock, Mark Nowitzky, Robyn Reagan, Yari Schutzer, Monk Turner and Kiahna Watkins.



As always, FFRF encourages conventionneers to finish off the debut celebratory evening with some luscious dessert.



Priest-turned-atheist Steve Uhl, Arizona, signs copies of his book *Out of God’s Closet*, the proceeds of which benefit FFRF. FFRF’s new studio will be named the Steven Uhl Friendly Atheist Studio, thanks to Steve’s generosity. The Diane Uhl Legal Wing and Diane Uhl Concert Grand Piano will soon open as well. Next to Steve is Katie Daniel, FFRF bookkeeper, doing a brisk business. Photo: Andrew Seidel

Inset right: Co-President Dan Barker introduces the traditional moment of bedlam, a highlight of FFRF’s traditional Nonprayer Breakfast inaugurated years ago by President Emerita Anne Nicol Gaylor.



A moment of bedlam, not a moment of silence! That’s Kathy Jackson in yellow, who is married (to her right) to Judy Saint, who directs the Sacramento FFRF chapter. Claudia Kellersch, Brumley, Calif., protects her ears from the enthusiastic response. Photos: Andrew Seidel

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Albert A. Young, 49, Philadelphia: Unlawful sexual contact with a minor, corruption of minors and indecent assault of a child. Young, the self-styled “apostle” of Total Deliverance Ministries, is accused of molesting his 15-year-old mentally challenged niece.

An affidavit said he made the girl sit in his lap in his office in August, fondled her buttocks inside her pants and kissed her while rubbing his clothed genitals on her and taking her hand to touch him. Young then allegedly told her not to tell anyone. *Source: Daily News, 11-3-14*

Bruce Harvey, 48, East Windsor, NJ: Terroristic threats, simple assault and harassment. Harvey, pastor of Apostolic Life Church in Ewing, is accused of threatening to kill his wife on Jesus’ orders.

Judge Robert Billmeier said Harvey, who retired in 2011 after 20 years as an investigator for the state Division of Criminal Justice, received a psychiatric evaluation and was found to be competent. *Source: Trenton Times, 10-30-14*

Nicholas Lawrence, 26, Pekin, IL: Indicted by a grand jury for causing a person younger than 13 to appear in a sexually explicit photo, which allegedly occurred in May. He was indicted earlier on charges of predatory criminal sexual assault of a child and aggravated criminal sex abuse.

Lawrence was fired in June as a youth pastor with the Pekin Church of God. *Source: Peoria Journal Star, 10-30-14*

Joseph M. Trusty, 47, Greenville, SC: Criminal solicitation of a minor. Trusty, a popular Upstate gospel singer, allegedly exchanged emails arranging a sexual encounter with an undercover deputy posing as a 15-year-old boy.

The Carolina Boys Quartet’s Facebook page posted a status announcing the departure of Trusty as the group’s baritone: “We were caught completely off-guard and are completely shocked at the situation. As soon as we received confirmation of the charges last night, we immediately terminated Joe’s association with The Carolina Boys Quartet.” *Source: WSPA, 10-29-14*

James R. Smith, 23, Ridgeview, W.VA: 1st-degree sexual abuse and sexual abuse by a parent or guardian. Smith, pastor at Morning Star House of Prayer, is charged with alleged incidents dating to 2009 in several states involving a 10-year-old boy.

“I just think that it’s somebody that’s out to sabotage him and I won’t believe no different,” said Janice Allen, a parishioner who lives across from the church. “Ever since he’s been here, there’s been tales told on him. He’s been confronted with it. Nobody can prove anything that’s even been said on him.” *Source: WCHS, 10-28-14*

Mark Haynes, 55, West Chester, PA: Dissemination of child pornography, possession of child pornography and criminal use of a communications facility. Court documents say authorities tracked the material to an Internet address at Sts. Simon and Jude Catholic Church, where Haynes is pastor, and that he admitted posing as a teen girl online to communicate with a 14-year-old girl.

The girl allegedly sent him about 10 videos of her masturbating, police said. Haynes’ email address included “irishwit2.” *Source: philly.com, 10-26-14*

Michael L. Harris Sr., 52, Hampton, VA: 3 counts of taking indecent liberties with a child while in a supervisory role. Harris allegedly molested a girl, now 17, in 2010, 2011 and 2012 while he was pastor at St. James Fellowship Church of God in Newport News. *Source: Daily Press, 10-26-14*

Clint Landry, 57, Fairbanks, AK: Indicted federally on 1 count each of attempted production of child pornography and attempted coercion and enticement of a minor, stemming from alleged incidents May 18-19. Landry was put on leave by the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks from his post as pastor at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The alleged victim’s age wasn’t released. *Source: Daily News Miner, 10-25-14*

Cameron T. Reeves, 34, Amarillo, TX: Soliciting a prostitute. Reeves, worship pastor at Hillside Christian Church in Canyon, was arrested at Motel 6. Kristina G. Moon, 31, was also arrested.

“I’m sorry for wounding the heart of Christ,” Reeves said in a resignation letter read to the congregation. He said he’d been a pornography addict for 25 years. *Source: Globe-News, 10-24-14*

Dana Sharp, Lake Mary, FL: Defrauding the federal government. Sharp, pastor of Spirit of Truth Worship Ministries, is accused of wrongly receiving \$109,000 in SSI payments for her 2 children from the Social Security Administration.



Her husband, **Rico Sharp**, a church officer, faces similar charges. *Source: WFTV, 10-23-14*

Wojciech Gil, a Catholic priest in custody in Krakow, has been formally charged in **Poland** with 10 child sex offenses, most involving the alleged abuse of boys under age 15 in Poland in 2000-01 and the **Dominican Republic** in 2009-13. He’s also charged with possessing pornographic materials and possessing a firearm and ammunition without having a permit.

The indictment said about 91,000 child porn images and 400 videos were found on the priest’s computer. Some boys were shown masturbating. Handcuffs, women’s underwear and a Walther pistol were also found. *Source: Gazeta Wyborcza/AP, 10-22-14*

Chad Shiffer, 44, Eau Claire, WI: Use of a computer to facilitate a child sex crime, attempted child enticement and attempted 2nd-degree sexual assault of a child. Shiffer, former youth pastor at Bethesda Lutheran Brethren Church, was among 9 men ranging in age from 20 to 60 arrested during a sting called Operation Child Safe.

Suspects responded to ads for minors seeking sex or adults involved in child trafficking, said investigators, who said the online ads got over 5,000 clicks.

Bethesda Lutheran’s pastor said Shiffer resigned for an unrelated reason in 2013. *Source: WEAU, 10-20-14*

Roger Mount, 72, Papua New Guinea: 40 counts of indecent assault, 14 counts of bugery, 5 counts of gross indecency and 3 counts of unlawful assault, all allegedly perpetrated against 7 victims in Australia in 1968-74 while Mount was serving as a Catholic priest.

The St. John of God religious order also paid 2 alleged victims of Mount’s abuse in the 1990s and 2000s more than \$100,000. He was deported to Australia after living in Papua New Guinea for about 30 years. *Source: Morning Herald, 10-20-14*

Derek Hutter, 37, Garland, TX: Continuous sex abuse of a child, possession of child pornography and online solicitation of a minor. Hutter, youth minister at South Garland Baptist Church, was arrested after a 14-year-old girl’s parents told police they found an email asking their daughter to photograph herself performing sexually explicit acts.

An affidavit said the girl told authorities the relationship started when she was 13 and included about 20 encounters. A search allegedly turned up photos of her face and genitals in Hutter’s possession. *Source: WFAA, 10-18-14*

Kent Bowles, 45, Norman, OK: Possession of a controlled dangerous substance, larceny, concealment of stolen property and obtaining cash or merchandise by bogus check or false pretenses. Bowles is chaplain for the University of Oklahoma football team and a regional representative for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at middle schools and high schools.

Bowles allegedly stole prescription pain pills from a home while the owner was test driving a new vehicle as part of an FCA fundraiser. (The police later determined there was no such fundraiser.)

The man’s wife monitored Bowles through a security camera feed on her phone. She saw him wandering through the house and notified her husband, who ended the test drive early and came home. *Source: newsok.com, 10-17-14*

Joshua Kimbrell, 29, Greenville, SC: 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct with a minor under 11. Kimbrell, who hosts a show called Common Cents on a Christian radio station, is accused of playing a game with a 3-year-old boy that involved inappropriate touching. The board of directors of the Palmetto Conservative Alliance, which Kimbrell chairs, called the accusations character assassination:

“Josh is in the midst of a bitter custody battle with his ex-wife to maintain an ongoing parenting relationship with his 3-year-old son. It is not uncommon that allegations such as these arise in the course of such disputes, particularly when the complainant, in this case the ex-wife, can benefit from the allegations.” *Source: Christian Post, 10-17-14*

Andrew M. Patterson, 45, Monroeville, PA: Child endangerment and 2 counts of child pornography. Patterson, youth pastor at Living Waters Family Worship Center, had more than 1,000 images of children, including infants, involved in sex acts with adult males, an affidavit said.

Child endangerment charges against his wife, **Tina Marie Patterson, 41**, were also filed due to conditions in the home, where their 14-year-old daughter also lives. The city building inspector deemed it “not fit for human habitation” due to excrement and urine from 10 Pomeranian dogs. The stench reportedly caused an investigator to vomit. *Source: triblive.com, 10-16-14*

Rex Allen Murphy, 30, Eubank, KY: Sodomy, sexual abuse and use of a minor in a sexual performance. Murphy taught Sunday school at Polly Ann Church of God, where the pastor denied that Murphy was also a youth pastor, which he told police he was.

Police allege he told a 16-year-old boy he could cure his homosexuality because he’d experimented with it. Police Chief Colin Hatfield said the alleged abuse occurred at least 10 times over 6 months. *Source: Huffington Post, 10-15-14*

John G. Tampa, 63, Southern Pines, NC: Indecent exposure. Tampa, rector at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, and **Howard Reynolds, 79**, Whispering Pines, are accused of engaging in 2 separate sex acts allegedly seen by an undercover officer in a public park about 1 p.m.

Tampa resigned as rector during an emergency meeting of the church vestry. *Source: Fayetteville Observer, 10-15-14*

Barry Freundel, 62, Washington: Voyeurism. Freundel, senior rabbi at Keshet Israel Synagogue, was taken away in handcuffs by DC police, who also took computers and other items from his Georgetown residence. He’s alleged to have videotaped at least 6 women in the temple’s mikvah, a ritual bath area.

“The video captures them exiting the shower and drying off before getting dressed,” the complaint said. Freundel allegedly used motion-detecting cameras hidden inside a clock, key chain, tissue box and computer battery charger.

Police searching his Towson University office also allegedly found a photo of nude women and handwritten lists of names. *Source: Daily Forward/WTTG, 10-14-14*

Robert Lanterman, Geneva, OH: Assault and disorderly conduct. Lanterman, pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, is accused of assaulting a 51-year-old parishioner in church.

Valerie Ferrante, the complainant, told police she and another woman were praying after Mass while Lanterman and some others were talking loudly near them. She said after about 5 minutes, she politely asked if he could carry on the conversation elsewhere.

She alleges that caused Lanterman to shout, “You can leave or find the door if you don’t like it. . . . You will never do that again. This is my church. You will never do this again, so help me God.”

Lanterman allegedly told the other woman to shut up when she tried to intervene and then grabbed Ferrante’s arm and pushed her toward another pew across the aisle. *Source: Fox 8/Star Beacon, 10-10-14*

Pamela J. Christensen, 47, Montgomery, IL: 3 counts each of attempted 1st-degree murder, aggravated battery and aggravated unlaw-

ful restraint. A search warrant affidavit said she told police she was sending the girls home to “meet Jesus Christ.” The girls, ages 12, 16 and 19, told police she brandished a knife while asking them if they accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Two of the girls were stabbed but were treated and released to the custody of Christensen’s father.

She allegedly told officers that her husband, Vaughn Christensen, had left phone messages that the world was ending and she needed to prepare the family to meet Jesus. He’s a former pastor at a Sugar Grove church. *Source: Sun-Times 10-10-14*

Tony Haglund, 49, The Villages, FL: Sexual penetration by a psychotherapist, sexual contact with a child under 16 and sexual contact by a psychotherapist. Haglund, a real estate agent, was indicted federally for allegedly having sex with a teen girl between January 2011 and December 2013 while he was a Lutheran pastor in Canton, SD. He was asked to resign after allegations were made, said ELCA Bishop David Zellmer. *Source: Daily Commercial, 10-8-14*

Calvin D. Gideon, 53, Plymouth, WI: 15 counts of possession of child pornography. Gideon, former youth director at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, allegedly told police he’d been downloading child porn for about 10 years but denied sexual contact with juveniles.

The church released a statement that Gideon’s firing wasn’t related to illegal activity during his employment. Gideon told police it was because of his drinking. *Source: AP, 10-7-14*

Dario Spasic, 22, Libertyville, IL: 2 counts of indecent solicitation of a child. Spasic is studying for the priesthood at St. Sava Serbian Orthodox School of Theology.

A sheriff’s spokesperson said Spasic contacted a person he thought was a 14-year-old boy on a social networking application to arrange a sexual encounter. *Source: Daily Herald, 9-23-14*

L.C. Terry, 84, Mt. Pleasant, TX: 4 counts of aggravated sexual assault of a disabled individual. Terry, pastor of Spring Hill Missionary Baptist Church, allegedly committed the assaults at an assisted living facility. *Source: Daily Tribune, 9-17-14*

Pleaded / Convicted

Isrom Johnson, 35, New Albany, IN: Guilty by jury of 3 counts of 3rd-degree sodomy for molesting a 14-year-old boy in 2010 who attended Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church, where Isrom was pastor.

The victim, now 18, testified he waited 2 years to tell his parents because he worried the news would destroy his family’s bond with the church community.

The prosecution argued the case was about abuse of trust, regardless of the victim’s sexuality or apparent cooperation. “It’s statutory because the child cannot consent. The 31-year-old at that table knew better,” said prosecutor Alicia Gomez. *Source: Courier-Journal, 10-30-14*

John O’Reilly, an Irish-born Catholic priest who moved to **Chile** in 1985, was found guilty of molesting a preteen girl between 2007-09 at a Santiago parochial school.

The school is owned by the Legionaries of Christ, a conservative religious order whose founder **Marcial Maciel** was revealed to be a pedophile who had fathered several children. *Source: Reuters, 10-15-14*

Marukudiyl Velan, 66, Brick, NJ: Guilty by jury of criminal sexual contact. Velan, pastor at Church of the Visitation, a Catholic parish, allegedly groped a woman he was friends with. He was acquitted of 6 counts of alleged molestation of the woman’s son and daughter.

Jurors watched a tape on which Velan told detectives he was resisting the children’s inappropriate moves. He said it was the 5-year-old girl who took his hand and placed it on her inner thigh, near her private parts, but said he moved it away. He claimed the boy, then 13, rubbed against him, but said he pushed him away, accidentally touching the child’s genitals. *Source: Asbury Park Press, 10-15-14*

Willard L. Jones, 63, Tulsa, OK: Pleaded guilty to subscribing to a false tax return and 3 counts of wire fraud. Jones, church pastor and former executive director of the Greater Cornerstone Community Development Project, admitted misappropriating \$933,000 from the nonprofit project for personal use. *Source: fbi.gov, 10-9-14*

Larry M. Clark, 62, Buena Vista, VA: Guilty by jury of 3 counts of indecent assault and 2 counts of corruption of a minor. The alleged victim, a boy who’s now 16, accused Clark of molesting him from 2011-13 while he was pastor at Pentecostal Outreach Church.

Clark is also charged with molesting 2 other boys who attended his church. The teen testified Clark molested him nearly every Sunday for

3 years after church services. *Source: Roanoke Times, 10-8-14*

Timothy Kane, 57, **Detroit**: Guilty by jury of 6 counts of embezzlement from a charity. Kane, assistant pastor at St. Moses of the Black Catholic Parish, took \$131,000 from the Angel Fund, a charity supported by the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Prosecutor Patrick Colleta told jurors that a Michigan prison inmate with whom Kane was having a relationship was also involved. “He spent the [Angel Fund] money to enrich his boyfriend,” Colleta said. *Source: Detroit News, 10-7-14*

Sentenced

Goel Ratzon, 63, **Tel Aviv**: 30 years in prison on convictions for multiple counts of rape, sodomy, molestation of minors and fraud, although he was acquitted on a charge of spiritual enslavement. Ratzon, whose first name is Hebrew for “Savior,” had 21 “wives” and about 40 children in his religious cult over 3 decades.

“He’s the messiah everyone has been talking about. When people find out, this country will shake,” one of his adherents said in a documentary film. *Source: Jerusalem Post, 10-28-14*

Glenn Humphreys, 61, Townsville, **Australia**: 22 months in prison after a jury found him guilty of 3 counts of unlawful and indecent assault for molesting a boy between 1983-86 when he was aged 15 to 17. Humphreys was serving as a Vincentian Catholic priest in **Perth** at the time. *Source: AAP, 10-15-14*

James M. Taylor, 30, Niskayuna, **NY**: \$1,255 fine, pay for and submit a DNA sample, no contact with the victim and her family for 5 years. Taylor, associate pastor at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Parish, pleaded guilty to endangering the welfare of a child and was permanently removed from the ministry in the Albany Diocese for kissing, sending texts and calling a 15-year-old girl from October 2013-May 2014.

Town Justice James Hughes told Taylor he couldn’t adequately express his outrage over Taylor taking advantage of his position of trust. *Source: Times Union, 10-8-14*

Thomas L. Kimmel, 68, Hammond, **IN**: 22 years in prison and \$16.5 million in restitution on federal convictions in N. Carolina for mail fraud, money laundering and conspiracy. Kimmel, a deacon at First Baptist Church, “used his professed spirituality and position of trust as a tool to defraud victims at their churches, the very places they felt the most safe,” said prosecutor David Bragdon.

The indictment charged that Kimmel solicited about \$20 million from investors through “biblical principles of finance” seminars he gave at churches. Most investors lost all of their principal.

According to Bragdon, “A pastor would introduce him, and he would take the pulpit. He would then give what was supposed to be independent financial advice about honoring God with your money and getting out of debt.” *Source: fbi.gov/nwitemes.com, 10-3-14*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

A Texas mother filed suit against **Second Baptist** and **Community of Faith churches** in **Houston** where convicted pedophile youth pastor **Chad Foster**, now 35, worked.

She alleges that on Skype video calls to her daughter, then 12, “Foster would expose himself and engage in acts of self-gratification while he was in his bedroom.” He also asked her to take off her clothes, talk dirty and have sex with him, the suit states.

“After that, my daughter no longer believed in God,” the mother told a reporter. The girl is now 17. Foster is serving 5 years on a conviction for molesting a different 16-year-old girl. *Source: KPRC, 10-27-14*

Noah Njegovan, 31, Brandon, **Manitoba**, an Anglican priest and son of Diocese of Brandon Bishop Jim Njegovan, is being sued by the dioceses’s insurer for \$250,000 for fraud, breach of trust, breach of contract and fraudulent misrepresentation. Another \$100,000 in punitive damages is sought.

The suit alleges Noah Njegovan made more than \$200,000 in fraudulent purchases, including cash advances, payment of meal, bar and hotel bills and 3 trips to Las Vegas, using church funds. *Source: Brandon Sun, 10-21-4*

Steve Munsey and **Melodye Munsey**, husband and wife co-pastors of the Family Christian Center megachurch in Munster, **IN**, face a bank foreclosure action on the home they’re trying to sell in Crown Point.

Old Plank Trail Community Bank claims the Munseys defaulted on the mortgage and owe \$533,847. First National Bank of Illinois filed a 2013 foreclosure complaint against Steve Munsey for more than \$600,000 owed on 4 other properties.

Evangelical Christian Credit Union foreclosed on the church’s Munster worship center in 2011. A newspaper probe showed church officials spent millions annually on leadership compensation, travel and meals, while missing bill payments. *Source: nwitemes.com, 10-15-14*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

A jury awarded Jose Lopez, 35, San Diego, \$13.5 million for being sexually abused as a child by **Gonzalo Campos**, a bible study teacher and leader of the **Linda Vista** Spanish Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Playa Pacifica Spanish Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in **Pacific Beach**.

Lopez was among 8 people who accused Campos of molesting them between 1982-95. He alleges he was 7 when Campos started grooming him.

The defendant, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, intends to appeal. “They protected and harbored a criminal” for years, said Irwin Zalkin, Lopez’s attorney. Campos lives now in Mexico. *Source: NBC San Diego, 10-31-14*

John Tominus, 48, Seminole, **FL**, will get \$180,000 to settle a suit against the **Catholic Diocese of Trenton, NJ**, for alleged molestation by priest **Terence McAlinden** in the 1980s. Tominus said McAlinden molested him more than 50 times, starting when he was 14 and continuing until his family moved out of state when he was 17.

“He introduced me to my first drink — made me drink scotch,” said Tominus, telling a reporter he’s struggled with alcoholism for decades. “He sodomized me. He threatened me. He destroyed my life.”

The diocese settled a suit in August involving McAlinden, 73, and victim Chris Naples for \$610,000. Two other suits were settled previously.

Trenton Bishop David O’Connell publicly apologized in October to Naples and “all those affected by the horrible scourge of sexual abuse of minors.”

The diocese also agreed to Naples’ demand that the bishop’s apology would be read at Masses at St. Theresa and at Visitation Catholic Church in Bricktown, which Naples attended growing up. *Source: Star-Ledger, 10-27-14*

Attorneys for 46 of the 88 former students alleging sexual abuse by Franciscan friar **Stephen Baker** have settled claims for a total of \$8 million. Baker fatally stabbed himself at age 62 in 2013. He was a teacher and athletic trainer from 1992-2001 at Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown, **PA**.

Baker committed suicide shortly after disclosure that 11 students at another school he taught from 1986-90 had settled with the school, the **Diocese of Youngstown, OH**, and his religious order. *Source: The Vindicator, 10-22-14*

11 British men have settled out of court with the **Verona Fathers**, an Italian Catholic order also known as the Comboni Missionaries, for alleged sexual abuse by a priest named **John Pinkman** at Mirfield Junior Seminary in Yorkshire in the 1960s and 1970s. Although 4 other abusers were named in the suit, most of the plaintiffs allege abuse by Pinkman, who died at age 48 of a heart attack in South Africa in 1984, or by **Domenico Valmaggia**, the seminary’s infirmarian, who died in Italy in 2011.

The men were awarded as little as £7,000 (\$11,180).

Brian Hennessy, then 17, remembered Valmaggia’s intense blue eyes: “He would kneel on the floor in front of me and masturbate me while having a broken form of conversation with me,” he wrote in an email.

A Catholic Church Insurance Association lawyer stressed that “the claims were made purely on a commercial basis with no admission of liability.” *Source: The Guardian, 10-19-14*

The **Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph** settled 30 lawsuits for \$9.95 million on the eve of jury deliberations after an 11-day trial in a suit filed by former altar boy Jon David Couzens. “Even though mine is just one of 30 lawsuits, this gives the other victims a chance to be free and be able to speak about it,” he said.

The settled suits involve 13 current and former priests and alleged abuse from 1963-87. The diocese previously settled suits for \$12.25 million. *Source: Kansas City Star, 10-14-14*

Settlement of a suit alleging child molestation by **Minnesota** Catholic priest **Thomas Adamson** in 1976-77 averted a November trial. Only limited settlement details were released, but the **Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis** and the **Diocese of Winona** agreed to 17 “child protection protocols.”

Many of the measures were mandated 14 years ago in the reforms U.S. bishops adopted. It was unclear how they’d be enforced, since many involve internal church workings.

Adamson was transferred more than a dozen times after being accused of molesting boys. The judge allowed the plaintiff to pursue a public nuisance claim because of the transfers. *Source: NY Times, 10-14-14*

Legal Developments

James Schook, 66, a former Louisville, **KY**, Catholic priest in prison wants to be released only 6 months into his 15-year sentence because he suffers from end-stage melanoma. Schook’s lawyer requested he be released on

“shock probation,” saying he “now realizes the importance of obeying and conforming to the community’s rules.”

Shock probation refers to a theory that some criminals are so shocked by their experience that they won’t commit another crime. A jury convicted Schook in April of 3 counts of sodomy and 1 count of indecent and immoral behavior with an individual.

Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney John Balliet said he likely would oppose early release but would first talk to victims. *Source: WDRB, 10-29-30*

Philadelphia lawyers for **Fr. Charles Engelhard** and former Catholic school teacher **Bernard Shero** argued to a Pennsylvania appeals court that their clients were wrongly convicted of child sexual assault.

The case is tied to **Msgr. William Lynn**, the first U.S. church official prosecuted over handling of abuse complaints. Lynn is free on bail while appealing his child endangerment conviction.

Engelhard and Shero, who are in prison, claim they have new evidence about the accuser and a witness who corroborated some of his story. *Source: AP, 10-28-14*

The names of **17 more priests** identified as child sex abusers were released by the **Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis**. The priests served in 84 parishes. Nine were accused of misconduct while working in the Twin Cities archdiocese, bringing to 55 now on its list of “credibly accused” offenders. Ten of the 17 are dead.

“My family has been waiting since 1962 to be validated — 52 years,” said Bob Schwiderski, who was molested by **New Ulm Diocese** priest **William Marks**, identified for the first time. “I personally know 27 people, including me, abused by him,” he said. *Source: Star Tribune, 10-24-14*

A civil court in **Malta** ordered continuation of a compensation claim filed by 10 alleged victims of sexual abuse by defrocked Catholic priests **Godwin Scerri**, 78, and **Carmelo Pulis**, 69, who were jailed for 5 and 6 years respectively after convictions for molesting boys at St. Joseph’s Home in Santa Venera in the 1980s. *Source: Malta Today, 10-23-14*

William J. Heim, 72, Troy, **NY**, a former Catholic priest and school guidance counselor convicted in 2002 of inappropriately touching an 11-year-old boy and possessing child pornography had his sexual offender registration status moved from Level 3 status (the top level) to Level 2.

Heim appeared before Judge Andrew Ceresia, who granted the reduction after hearing testimony that Heim had not reoffended since his 2004 prison release. *Source: Times Union, 10-22-14*

A Dec. 1 trial date was set in a **Montana** civil case alleging **11 Catholic nuns** abused at least 95 students at a school run by the **Ursuline Sisters**.

It’s alleged the nuns, who served from the 1940s to 1970s at St. Ignatius Mission School, physically, sexually and emotionally abused students from the Flathead Indian Reservation. Two have been convicted criminally. *Source: Raw Story, 10-10-14*

Allegations

The **Omaha Catholic Archdiocese** said in a press release that an **unidentified priest** who died in 2012 has been accused of molesting a male congregant while he was pastor at Holy Ghost Parish in the mid-1980s.

Because the priest belonged to the New Jersey-based Order of Augustinian Recollects, the order is carrying out the investigation, which has also been reported to police. *Source: Journal Star, 11-1-14*

Over 20 former members of Grace Cathedral, Cuyahoga Falls, **OH**, have accused pastor and televangelist **Ernest Angley**, 93, of demanding they have abortions or vasectomies and alleged he engaged in and ignored sexual abuse by others. Accusers said he personally examined “the genitals of the male parishioners before and after their surgeries.”

“He doesn’t want people to have kids because it would take their time and money away from [the church],” said Greg Mulkey, who sang with the Hallelujahs during Angley’s TV services. *Source: Beacon Journal, 10-14-14*

Removed / Resigned

David M. Hope, 74, resigned as honorary assistant bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Bradford, **UK**, after an inquiry found Hope covered up while he was archbishop of York for serial pedophile cleric **Robert Waddington**, now deceased.

Complaints about Waddington go back to at least 1989. An Australian bishop reported abuse by Waddington involving choirboys during the 1960s to Hope in 1999. *Source: Daily Mail, 10-30-14*

The Vatican defrocked **3 Ohio priests** because of alleged child molestation occurring more than a decade ago. **Thomas Kuhn**,

Thomas Feldhaus and **Ronald Cooper** had been on administrative leave for years.

Kuhn was suspended in 2002 after police seized office computers at St. Henry’s Parish in Dayton, where he was pastor. Court documents showed the computers were used to access websites with names such as “boyforboy,” “boyzparty” and “cityboyz.” He was convicted in 2004 of 11 misdemeanor charges of public indecency and providing alcohol to minors.

Feldhaus was placed on leave in 2003 for for allegedly molesting a minor twice in 1979. He also was accused in a lawsuit of molesting a minor at Our Lady of Victory in Delhi Township from 1986-91.

Cooper was put on leave in 2004 for allegedly touching a boy as an associate pastor at St. Aloysius Gonzaga Parish in Bridgetown in the mid-1980s. Feldhaus and Cooper were never charged criminally. *Source: cincinnati.com, 8-28-14*

St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson suspended retired Catholic priest **John J. Ghio** due to a recently reported allegation of sexual abuse of a minor in the early 1980s. Ghio, who last served as retired priest in residence at Annunciation Catholic Church in Webster Groves, lives in an undisclosed monitored environment, Carlson said. *Source: St. Louis Public Radio, 10-21-14*

Wendy Alec, the wife and co-founder of GOD TV with **Rory Alec**, says her husband left her for the divorcee daughter of a farmer in South Africa. Rory Alec resigned in early October from the UK-based network, citing “moral failure” on his part.

Wendy Alec told viewers that the “devil got in very, very easily.” According to Charisma News, Pastor Benny Hinn and “other leaders from the body of Christ are actively ministering to the couple, hoping to bring restoration.”

Hinn was sued in 2011 by the Christian publishing house Strang Communications, which claimed Hinn’s alleged extramarital relationship with televangelist Paula White violated the morality clause of his contract. *Source: Daily Mail, 10-9-14*

Paul Morton, 54, **Glasgow**, was suspended by the Diocese of Motherwell from public ministry at St. Bride’s Catholic Parish. A police spokesman said: “We can confirm we have received a report in connection with historical sexual abuse allegations and the matter is being investigated.” *Source: Scottish Daily Record, 10-9-14*

Ken Coughlin, pastor at Holy Family Catholic Parish, Grand Blanc, **MI**, will stay on administrative leave after a county prosecutor said he won’t file charges over allegations Coughlin inappropriately touched 2 students earlier this year at Holy Family Catholic School.

Diocese of Lansing Bishop Earl Boyea said the leave stems from Coughlin’s alleged inappropriate relationship with adult women: “Father Coughlin has been undergoing an assessment and treatment to address his embrace of celibacy and its proper expression.” *Source: mlive.com, 10-9-14*

Auxiliary Bishop Francis Reiss said in a letter to parishioners that **Thomas Belczak**, 60, Plymouth, **MI**, “has been required to step aside as pastor of St. Kenneth [Catholic] Parish, effective Oct. 9. This action results from a law enforcement investigation into the alleged improper use of St. Kenneth Parish funds.”

The pastor’s brother, **Edward Belczak**, 69, and his church administrator were indicted in April for allegedly stealing \$700,000 from St. Thomas More Church in Troy. *Source: Detroit Free Press, 10-9-14*

Juan D. McFarland, 47, was removed as pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, Montgomery, **AL**, by an 80-2 vote but kept preaching until a judge ordered him to turn in his keys and his church-provided Mercedes and stay away from the church he’d led for 24 years.

McFarland earlier confessed from the pulpit he’d had sex with female church members without revealing he had AIDS. “Transmitting a Sexually Transmitted Disease” is a misdemeanor but no charges have been filed. *Source: WSFA, 10-9-14*

George Trabold, 67, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Millburn, **NJ**, was removed from ministry by the Archdiocese of Newark during an investigation of alleged sexual abuse while he was pastor at St. John the Evangelist Church in Bergenfield. *Source: nj.com, 10-8-14*

Catholic Msgr. **Charles Eckermann**, a former Bishop Ludden High School principal, was removed from ministry by the Diocese of Syracuse, **NY**, after the Vatican ruled a former altar boy’s sexual abuse claim from 25 years ago was credible.

The alleged victim, Kevin Braney, said Eckermann raped him more than a dozen times in a basement storage room in the rectory at St. Ann’s Church in Manlius in 1988-89, when he was 15. The Vatican ordered Eckermann, 83, to submit to a life of prayer and penance. *Source: Post-Standard, 10-3-14*

Email: blackcollar@ffr.org

Letterbox

Crime blotter bluntly drives point home

In the course of about six weeks, I received 30 solicitations in the mail from charities, not counting telephone calls and emails. About half were from religious groups, some of which I'd never heard of. My patience finally ran out, so I clipped two entire pages of the Black Collar Crime Blotter from the latest Freethought Today and mailed them to the next religious group asking for money, with a note asking them to "explain why I should support this sort of thing." No response yet.

By the way, to the woman who recommended a Robert Heinlein novel for its negative take on religion, I recommend *Pavane* by Keith Roberts.

David M. Shea
Maryland

Why \$2K? To boost building, legal funds

Enclosed is a check for \$2,000. Recent Supreme Court decisions have upset me enough that I want you to use \$1,000 for the Legal Fund to help fight unconstitutional support for religion. I would have you use the other \$1,000 for the Building Fund to help finish the new headquarters.

Keep up the good work.

Karla Martin
Washington

I am an 87-year-old FFRF member, happily an atheist now and an atheist throughout my adult life. I am a resident at a home for veterans. The enclosed check is payable in the amount of \$1,000 for a Life Membership.

My best to FFRF and peace.

Francis C. Crawford
California

Please find enclosed a donation of \$1,000 for your excellent continuing efforts at keeping church and state separate. Keep up the good work.

P.S. My company provides for matching donations. Please look for one in a bit.

Andrew Platzer
California

Looking forward to next convention

I want to express the sheer exhilaration I feel from having attended the Los Angeles convention. This was my second. The first was in Portland Ore., and sadly I missed the one in Madison last year due to illness.

Who knew that lawyers and a theoretical physicist could be so interesting, compelling and humorous to listen to? Each person that stepped up to the podium delivered an intelligent, and in some cases, a heart-rending message to those of us so privileged to be in their company.

In my past years, I have subscribed to the Groucho Mark philosophy of membership: "I could never be a member of an organization that would have somebody like me as a member." But I am delighted and proud to be a Lifetime Member.

My wife, Kristy, who hasn't quite made up her mind as to what label to place on herself (agnostic is most likely), has agreed to join me next year

in Madison as she was so happy to see me so happy when I returned home. I know it will please you to have another person in attendance, and you will certainly appreciate that she is much easier on the eyes than I am.

Jerry Foreman
Nevada

Thank you all for putting together another great convention. The speakers were outstanding and made some difficult subject matter understandable. The venue was impressive. The food was good. My only complaint was the half hour it took us to get out of town due to blocked roads for a race (which was hardly your fault).

Ed and I have attended lots of your conventions, and they just keep getting better and better. Looking forward to Madison.

Sue Mercier
Wisconsin

Editor's note: Sincere thanks to Sue and Pennsylvanian Ed Mercier for signing up at the convention as Lifetime Members. Sue was lead plaintiff in FFRF's successful federal lawsuit filed in 2001 against a Ten Commandments monument in a public park in La Crosse, Wis.

What a fabulous and well-organized convention. Every single speaker was outstanding, informative, funny, bright. Thank all of you at FFRF for making it happen.

Linda Josheff
Wisconsin

Student essayists inspire freethinkers

Congratulations to Delaney Gold-Diamond on her winning essay "My Evolution as a Freethinker." It's great to see the torch of freethought being carried proudly by young people. Her story about the conversation with her dad when she was 5 sounded very familiar!

Recently, I was driving through our town with my 6-year-old daughter. We had the following exchange after passing a church:

PHOEBE: "What do they do at church?"

ME: "Well, remember that book we read (*One World, Many Beliefs* by Kelly Mochel), where some people believe in a god, some believe in lots of gods and some don't believe in any?"

PHOEBE: "Yes."

ME: "For the people who believe in one god, that's where they go every week to talk about this god. They also talk about stuff that you already know, like being nice to other people and treating others as you want to be treated."

PHOEBE: (after short pause): "I don't believe in any gods."

I was "woo-hooing!" inside but just replied, "It's OK if you believe in one god, more than one or none at all. We just have to be nice and respect everyone."

I haven't told her about my atheistic views, but only because she's never asked me what I believe, but I'm looking forward to that conversation. Who knows, maybe one day my daughter will win an FFRF essay contest!

Tom Roche
New Jersey

The batch of essay winners in the November issue was especially inspir-



Thanks for the plug!

(But they forgot *our* Web address.) Anthony Matz, Pennsylvania, found this gem in West Lawn: "Glad Tidings is a very large Assemblies of God church that draws its members from all over Berks County and beyond."

ing. I couldn't help smiling about Bijan Parandeh's upbringing in the Church of Costco. Reem Abded-Razek's horrifying story brought to mind tales of early Christian martyrs. I'm glad that, unlike them, she survived both physically and emotionally.

It's a good feeling to have freethinkers half a century my junior to admire.

Kathryn Yagelo
Michigan

I recently received sixth place for my submission to the college essay competition. Last year, I was fortunate to receive an honorable mention in the high school contest. I am very thankful and honored to once again have been recognized.

It wasn't until the end of my junior year in high school that going to college became a possibility. Jehovah's Witnesses are discouraged from going to college. Fortunately, with the support of friends and organizations like FFRF, I was able to make my first year at the University of Iowa a great success and look forward to the next three years.

Aaron McLaughlin
Iowa

Dear deist: 'May The Force be with you'

I read with delight the profile of Steve Pinski, the first deist member of FFRF that I can recall. I'm even more delighted to see this demonstration that FFRF embraces all who share the conviction that no one has the right to impose their beliefs, or nonbeliefs, on others, no matter how they arrive at that conclusion.

But I found myself feeling like the converse of Oprah when swimmer Diana Nyad declared herself an atheist. "I can stand at the beach's edge with the most devout Christian, Jew, Buddhist, go on down the line, and weep with the beauty of this universe and be moved by all of humanity. . . . My definition of God is humanity and is the love of humanity."

Winfrey responded, "Well, I don't call you an atheist then. I think if you believe in the awe and the wonder and the mystery, then that is what God is."

I would suggest that "god" is not the best term for what Steve describes as "the mystery behind the existence of the universe." I would say, "Maybe you shouldn't call yourself a deist, since most of us atheists/agnostics/humanists/freethinkers express that same mystery without calling it god."

But I'd also say, "Whatever you call it or yourself, welcome to FFRF, and may The Force be with you." And "Live

long and prosper."

Joan Reisman-Brill
New York

State laws mandate 'In God We Trust'

I am very pleased to hear that FFRF is looking into problems of religious practices in the University of Mississippi football program. I am a [biology] professor at UM, and I also find this practice to be in possible violation of separation of church and state.

By the way, do you know that by law in the state of Mississippi, all public school classrooms must prominently post an "In God We Trust" poster? It is true. So, thank you.

Name withheld
Mississippi

Editor's note: Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell says that Miss. Code. Ann. § 37-13-163 requires the display of the "motto" in each classroom. Several other states have similar laws and many more "encourage" displaying the motto. The 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld Virginia's, the only circuit in which the mandatory requirement has been tested.

Last Supper photo was potentially offensive

I am a member of FFRF and long-time agnostic. I am concerned that the photo titled "Just another day at the office(r's meeting)" on page 7 of the October issue supports Christians' notion that they are victims. I have always left my back issues of Freethought Today in public places to promote FFRF, and I imagine any intelligent person reading it would appreciate the logic and passion in it.

Nevertheless, I wonder if someone newly introduced to FFRF might see this as merely mocking.

David Kehe
Washington

Editor's note: Without humor we are lost! (The photo depicted college students in a Last Supper setting.) You might also say it belies the claim that we're "angry" atheists. On the scale of mocking, I'd give it a 4 at most, 10 being the worst. We appreciate your input.

Thanks for challenging religious extremists

Thank you for your continued efforts to prevent religious extremists (and some mainstream believers) from imposing a biased and distorted picture of religion and religious freedom on impressionable public schoolchil-



Anti-woman measure passes

Tennessee Life Member Harry Freeman sends a Memphis marquee. “It’s one of our churches doing a bit of politicking over a proposed constitutional amendment limiting women’s abortion choices. It’s bad enough that they are indulging in influencing people’s votes, but, as usual, they are on the wrong side of the issue.” Voters approved the amendment 53% to 47%. FFRF Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert notes that while IRS regulations prohibit churches from supporting or opposing candidates, they can legally (within limits) encourage voting for or against certain issues such as Amendment 1. See “Churches and Political Lobbying Activities” at ffrf.org/faq/state-church/.

dren. In some cases, they reveal their ignorance of the First Amendment. In others, they choose to disregard the Constitution and court decisions, reflecting their belief that religion trumps the Constitution and the democratic process.

The extremists also chronically and despicably view women as inferior and a source of “sin.” True students of religion are well-aware of the way sacred texts are used to maintain male supremacy and scapegoat women for social problems.

Keep up the crucial work of educating the public about state-church separation — its source, its purpose and how it applies to everyday examples.

Jerry Gilbert
Colorado

‘X-rated’ bible image suits him fine

The cartoon image [on the front of FFRF’s nontract on the “X-rated” bible] are vile, disgusting and blasphemous. Oh, and possibly irreverent. Just my kind of art.

I would suggest that they be made available in signed, limited edition prints. I would hope to be able to purchase #1.

P.S. I really enjoyed the convention.
Frank Atkin
California

Coaches beseeching which football god?

I’m glad that FFRF is vigilant in contesting school prayers, especially by

football coaches. I wonder if they pray to God Hercules or God Mercury for speed and strength. Oops, sorry, wrong gods. Of course they pray to the Christian god.

What if both coaches go down on their knees and pray? Then who will God choose to reward? A typical answer would be it depends on who has shown more earnestness in their prayer.

I suppose they have a measuring gizmo in heaven to register the degree of earnestness for each prayer.

G.M. Chandu
New York

Editor wonders: Like the degree of difficulty gizmo used in competitive sporting events?

Free at last: ‘My brain is my God’

I’ve just finished reading (every word) of the October issue. Shame on the composition department for not completing the final paragraphs of both articles on page 23. I especially like the personal stories, as it makes me feel better that I am no longer alone with my thoughts.

Also, since becoming a Life Member, I am now a committed “freethinker,” which means my brain is my God and I can continue living life doing my own thing.

The myth of the bible is trashed. In other words, I am “free at last, free at last!”

James L. Ehernberger
Wyoming

Editor’s note: We regret that an unfortunate technical glitch caused the last line to vanish from both articles.

Finding equal time for nonbelievers

I was recently invited to a wedding and needed to take five days off from the school district where I work. During the school year, we have three personal days which can be taken without providing a reason. I could have used sick leave for the other two days but felt uncomfortable doing so, since I didn’t even have a sniffle.

I noticed on the leave request form a box for “religious observance” and couldn’t help feeling this was a bonus for believers and something that nonbelievers should also be able to benefit from, so I checked that box. (I reasoned that the wedding was taking place in a church, and the dates did happen to coincide with Rosh Hashanah.)

My leave was approved without question. All five days were withdrawn from my accumulated sick leave and I still keep my secular three days. I know religion makes me feel sick; apparently payroll agrees!

Name withheld by request

Religion’s intrusions simply mind-boggling

I became a member about six months ago. Before joining FFRF, I was totally uninformed as to the many blatantly unconstitutional actions, largely on the part of city governments, school boards, coaches, etc. It is nothing short of mind-boggling how many tax-supported entities feel it’s totally acceptable to fuse government and religion.

The rationale is always the same: 1. Hey, this is a Christian country, founded on Christian ideology. (Nothing could be further from the truth!) 2. No one is required to attend or take part; it’s strictly voluntary. 3. Not one person in/on this (a) school (b) city (c) team, etc., has objected.

To suggest that the “good people” supporting these religious overtures are “totally clueless” would be a gross understatement.

Thank you for the work you do. You have a lifelong supporter. I hope to join at a higher level next year.

Dave Godfrey
Missouri

Member, FFRF contest Good Friday closing

A member’s letter to the editor which was published Nov. 7 in the Fayette County Record, La Grange, Texas:

Last April I spotted signs on the courthouse saying “Happy Easter” and another sign on the County Clerk’s office with three crosses, both saying they would be closed “in observance of Good Friday.” It’s a violation of our right to separation of state and church for government to publicly celebrate one religion’s holy day, so I sent pictures of the signs to the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

On April 11, FFRF sent letters to Judge Janecka and the county clerk advising that the signs and the religious holiday are “unconstitutional and inappropriate,” noting that they favor Christianity over other faiths and promote religion over nonreligion. The First Amendment prohibits government from appearing to endorse the religious holiday of one faith while ignoring the holidays of others. Christians get a day off to celebrate their holy day; others must take vacation days to celebrate theirs.

Six months later, three weeks before the election, the issue is suddenly in the newspapers with the judge boldly championing the Good Friday holiday. I’d say wrapping oneself in Christianity to help win an election also looks unconstitutional and inappropriate.

The people who wrote the First Amendment valued national unity. They valued pluralism, making “E pluribus unum” the original U.S. motto. They wrote the First Amendment to foster unity and protect our freedom by limiting what the government can do to us. It requires government to be strictly neutral toward religion, and the Texas oath of office requires officials to uphold the Constitution.

I think we’ve lost sight of those original national values. Today the politics of division prevail, and politicians use wedge issues to divide us and discriminate for political advantage.

Assistant County Attorney Streicher rationalizes the Good Friday holiday saying it reflects the general culture of Fayette County and, “. . . most of our people would like to be off that day.”

Streicher plans a public hearing on the holiday schedule, saying, “Anyone who has an issue with the county holidays should come forward.” I accept his invitation.

Chris Allen, After-Life Member
Texas

FFRF sent another complaint letter to the county Nov. 7 along with an action alert to area members.

Leviticus stopped bible reading in class

I am old enough that we used to have homeroom bible reading in public high school (Longmeadow High School, Longmeadow, Mass., 1961-65) to open the day. Everyone used to read Psalms or Proverbs, but being an obnoxious teenager, I read the sex code out of Leviticus.

After that, Mr. Ryan, the homeroom teacher, never let anyone read the bible in homeroom again. I can just imagine his discussion with school officials later that morning.

Ronald M. Trachtenberg
Wisconsin

Happy Solstice

But once per year
Sol seems so near
Yes! It is the boldest


A singular date
Oh so great
Tis the Summer Solstice

It now does wane
Let no one complain
Nary reason to fear

Wane it must
Indeed just
Sol does it again next year!

Paul Donald Roth
Ontario, Canada

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.

It Pays to Complain

Bible quotes vanish from whiteboard

The Clinton County School District in Plattsburg, Mo., ordered removal of bible quotes from a middle school administrator’s whiteboard.

In an Oct. 8 letter of complaint, Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott informed the district, “Courts have continually held that school districts may not display religious messages or iconography in public schools.”

The school district’s attorney responded Oct. 10 to say that the bible verse had been removed.

Joel Osteen trip trips FFRF trigger

Botetourt County, Fincastle, Va., ceased sponsorship and website promotion of a trip to see megachurch pastor and televangelist Joel Osteen trip after getting a Sept. 26 letter from Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott.

“We respect the importance of gov-

ernment coordination of community events and trips, but holding religious events specifically for a Christian subset of citizens is inappropriate and unconstitutional,” wrote Elliott.

The county removed the event posting, and County Administrator Kathleen Guzi said in a response letter that the county was not hosting or organizing the trip and would seek legal advice regarding FFRF’s concerns.

Better ‘BELIEVE’ it: Yearbook cleansed

Gallia County (Ohio) Local Schools will no longer endorse religion on the cover of its yearbooks. The PTO of Ad-daville Elementary School printed and distributed yearbooks with a large cross bearing the word “BELIEVE” on the cover. Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote to the school district Sept. 26.

A school district attorney forwarded Markert a letter from the superintendent to parents, explaining that the



Distinguished state/church scholar Erwin Chemerinsky (center) spoke about *The Case Against the Supreme Court* (the title of his newest book) and was named Champion of the First Amendment at FFRF’s October national convention in Los Angeles. Staff Attorneys Andrew Seidel (left), Rebecca Markert, Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor and Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott are also pictured. Photo: Chris Johnson

religious message was inappropriate. The superintendent also wrote to the PTO, saying that in the future, the group “must refrain from displaying any religious message or symbol in publications that are or appear to be sponsored by or associated with the Gallia County Local School District.”

Sharing the Crank Mail

A new suggested destination (“Antartica”) pops up in this edition of the fan mail, printed as received.

Destruction: My goal is to destroy/dissolve this organization. I will you all the resources and assets possible to do so. 75% of Americans claim to be of Christian faith., which makes us the majority, and in a traditional democratic republic, the majority rules. Ideas that are anti-god should be left to the individual, not the nation as a whole. When the majority unites we will smash this website/ organization/ or company like a sledge hammer to a ant. Be ready, and let the destruction begin. — Andrew Figueroa, Virginia

Ole Miss: What a group of self-serving, smug assholes must make up your organization. How altruistic of you to limit the ability of those who voluntarily want to incorporate religion into their academics in order to appease a small minority. If you want to serve, go become a social worker, a nurse, a fireman, a police officer, or a teacher. — You Guys Are Douchebags

Censorship in the name of your org?: By trying to “erase” God out of our country you are STOMPING ON others freedoms trying to erase our freedoms as Christians. Expressing your thoughts are one thing, but silencing others is a HITLER MOVE called CENSORSHIP which is what your org is based upon. HYPOCRITS! — Tina Balboa

Pamphlets in Florida: You little commie fags wouldn’t have the nuts to confront the rag head arabs about all the violence and pedophilia associated with their koran. They would behead you and cut off your penises(if you had one). the only reason you pick on Christianity is you know you will get away with it, you gutless wonders. I dare you asses to say ANYTHING negative against the Islamic animals. — Jerry Babbitt, Palmdale, Calif.

Praying at Football Games: No, no court of law, no cop, nothing is going to stop Piedmont High School from praying at Football games! Where do you have the right to press legal matters in our face? If I was you I would give up now because your all edicts! Have a Blessed day! — Andrew Roberts

Religion at school: Sikh Boy At Gildo Rey Elementary Allowed To Carry Dagger. Why don’t you Christian hating, hate mongers do something. Show everyone you’re not the pice of shit, hating, double standard, hypocrites. Everyone knows you are. — Ryan Mucko

Meat: Since atheists are no more than meat on the hoof and you aren’t pork or shellfish, can we feed you to the Muslims? For the record, Jesus is mentioned in the US Constitution. — NW Patriot

Freedom of religion or not: Why is you jackasses have nothing better to do that go around make the rest of us miserable. Don’t you have

real jobs? Everyone seems to get along just fine until you show up. I don’t believe in that other cheek crap. Try to come to my town and force your belief system upon me I’d be for sending you down the road with a can of whoop ass. I recon your a socialist piece of crap too. Hitler was a socialist and an atheist. The commies in Russia and the nazis in Germany were like you trying to destroy religion and tell people how they should think or believe. — Dave Tuckness, Texas

Why: It seems to me that you are using the social media to push your ideas! Why don’t you shut the fuck up and crawl back into the holes to crawled out of! If you don’t like what I say, come and visit me! I value my second amendment! — David McDaniel, Cedar Lake, Ind.

Get a Life: You folks as a bad as ISIS in that you are persecuting Christians and others who are doing nothing to you. This County was founded on Christian principals and the framers said not to create a state religion but they did say we were all free to practice or religion. — Steve Dornak, Houston, Texas

Prayer: I always felt something was missing when I was growing up, like a hole in my heart because I didn’t have a earthy father for so long. When I was 25 I accepted Jesus into my heart and I felt as though the hole in my heart was filled and I was hole again. This world tells us we are nothing if we don’t look a certain way or have an a college education or have a home in a particular neighborhood or job. With the God I have a relationship with, he loves me just the way I am with all my flaws and shortcomings. It is comforting to know that my God loves me unconditional. — Jennifer Lovering

Russellville, AZI school: I sincerely hope and pray everyone @ the FFRF develop both Ebola & Aids dying a slow horrible death. If not that, then everyone meets up w/ radical Muslims then have your head lopped off. — James Simms, Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Freedom: Your agnostic view of origins taught in public schools is a religion since it is based upon faith that is how origins began - a dot in space that exploded into the known universe. It takes more faith to believe THAT than to believe that a creator was involved. Homeschooling will continue to grow and your faith will have no involvement in it. Keep it up, eventually schools will be forced to closed due to teachers refusing to adhere to your belief system and more and more students being home-schooled. Check the stats on homeschooling fool. — Rod T, North Carolina

Offended: If u wish to go to hell and not believe in Jesus dosent mean that I have to b deprived of what I want. U can b offended or put ear plugs in. I will pray for all u. And out loud — Erick Foster

Prayer group: We are sponsoring a massive prayer group after our homecoming at licking



Truth be told

After a problematic school in Texas sent home a flier with students about its “Fall Festival” celebration (the school explicitly stated that it was not a Halloween celebration), FFRF’s local complainant made goodie bags for the festival containing this reminder.

vally school. We would like you to come and see what Jesus christ has to offer stop and pick up your friends at springboro baptist church and bring them with you — Scott Colegrove, Pataskala, Ohio

Yall are a joke: When two kids and an adult want to be baptized on a football field that’s their right. I served so you can have your opinion and they can have their opinion but really wish yall were at the other side of my sights. I more kill to add to the bed post. — Steve Ordway, Kalkaska, Mich.

Freedom of Speech: If someone places a statue with Bible verses on it, that doesn’t force you to worship it, or believe in the Scriptures on it anymore than McDonald’s sign reading “Billions Served” compels you to believe it or even patronize the establishment. The precept behind your organization is ludacris. Hitler ran a propaganda campaign, too. Good job, Nazis. — Jason Self, Midland, Texas

Really: Your a pathetic organization. Our nation is already a joke. My free thinking concludes if you don’t like religion, move somewhere else. Maybe a Antartica. — Mark Hoover

Get out: if you guys don’t like it we don’t care if you just leave our nation that was founded under God go to Canada — Tyler Walton, Belavista, Arkansas

JESUS: I rebuke you people in the name of JESUS CHRIST! !!!!!!! — Steven Johnson

Your foundation is offensive! Close your doors. I find YOU offensive. — Noneov Yorbinness, BarackObama@whitehouse.gov

Religion in public school: I would very much appreciate you took up the cause of evolution being taught in schools. It is an unproven belief system being forced on our children by the government. The very people who support it say as much. If you really are about what you say you are you will help bring real science back to schools; true discussion in universities. We have freedom OF religion and my rights are being crushed when evolution is forced on my children by a system designed to protect them. — Nick Glover, Norman, Okla.

Suck a fat one: Everyone has the right to pray where ever they want no matter if it’s a football coach, student, or teacher. Fuck you you should all be hung in public for what you all do. — Eat a dick, eatadick@god.com, Lewes, Delaware

shame on you: If you don’t like god in school pull YOUR child out then. in case you haven’t noticed since God has been taken out of school schools are getting shot up by freaks with machine guns kids are getting bullied more now than ever before and killing themselves. way back when I was in school we said the Pledge of Allegiance with God in it you didn’t hear about these things happening. You guys are sick people who probably believe we evolved from apes. — melissa reed, rowlett, texas

State/Church Bulletin

Election results are mixed bag

Daniel Moran, a Democrat and atheist running for the Texas House of Representatives, lost his race Nov. 4, as did James Woods, an Arizona Democrat and atheist running for the U.S. House. Woods was the only open atheist running for Congress.

Tan Parker, R-Flower Mound, defeated Moran by getting 77.3% of the vote. Incumbent Republican Rep. Matt Salmon won 68% of the vote against Woods.

Arizona Democratic state Rep. Juan Mendez, an atheist who gave a secular invocation from the floor of the House (for which he was honored at FFRF's 2013 convention), won a second term.

Religion News Service reported that voters rejected two Rhode Island politicians who criticized teen atheist activist Jessica Ahlquist. Democrat Peter Palumbo, who called her an "evil little thing," lost his legislative bid, and Cranston Mayor Allan Fung, who also criticized Ahlquist, lost the gubernatorial race to Democrat Gina Raimondo, who became the state's first woman governor.

Other religion-related results:

- A state constitutional amendment banning use of "foreign law" in Alabama courts passed 72%-28%. It was first put forth by people worried that Islamic sharia could someday influence court cases.

- "Fetal personhood" amendments lost in Colorado (65%-35%) and North Dakota (64%-36%).

- Tennessee voters by 52.6% approved a state constitutional amendment saying this: "Nothing in this Constitution secures or protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of an abortion. The people retain the right through their elected state representatives and state senators to enact,

amend, or repeal statutes regarding abortion, including, but not limited to, circumstances of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest or when necessary to save the life of the mother."

It gives legislators more power to restrict abortions. The amendment received much more support in rural areas.

- Illinois voters approved by 67%-33% a nonbinding referendum requiring health insurers to include prescription birth control as part of drug coverage.

Humanist denied chaplaincy sues

Atheist Navy chaplain candidate Jason Heap filed suit Nov. 5 in U.S. District Court in Virginia to challenge the rejection in June of his chaplain application. Defendants are Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and several other Defense Department and Navy personnel.

Heap has a doctorate in religion and has studied at Oxford and Texas Christian University and is a former youth minister. The suit asks for his reinstatement as a Navy chaplain and the designation of the Humanist Society as the official endorsing agent for humanist chaplains.

Heap and his supporters say that humanist beliefs "are constitutionally equal to religious faith and that chaplains are key contacts for troops on a variety of personnel and quality-of-life matters, ranging from recreational activities to suicide prevention programs," reported Stars and Stripes.

Wis. judge rules church must pay

St. Raphael Cathedral property was

properly taxed in 2013 by the city of Madison, Wis., because the Catholic parish missed a deadline to seek a religious exemption, Dane County Circuit Judge Richard Niess ruled Nov. 4. The cathedral suffered severe fire damage in 2005. The property was unused for years until 2013 when a 14-station Way of the Cross display was installed.

If not for missing the deadline, Niess said the property could have been given a \$101,125 tax exemption because the Way of the Cross served a religious purpose.

"You may all go on to the Court of Appeals to see if I'm right," Niess told the parties.

City Assessor Mark Hanson said the city denied St. Raphael's Congregation's 2014 tax exemption request. "We didn't feel the current use qualified for an exemption." The congregation will have to pay the tax and then file in January for a refund as it did for 2013, Hanson said.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote a formal letter to the assessor and addressed the Madison Common Council in opposition to the exemption.

Calif. city council prayers appealed

Carole Beaton, a Eureka, Calif., activist and FFRF member, is appealing to the state Court of Appeal a December 2013 ruling that said nonsectarian prayers at Eureka City Council meetings are constitutional.

The city and Beaton settled part of the suit in October in an agreement prohibiting the city from using its resources, city seal and the title of mayor to promote or support prayer breakfasts. The city agreed to pay Beaton \$16,500 for attorney's fees.

"Prayer is religion in action, so prayer and government don't mix either," plaintiff's attorney Peter Martin said. "We would like the Court of Appeal to draw a bright line."

The point is to keep religion out of government, not out of people's lives, Beaton said in an email to the Eureka Times-Standard. "The separation of church and state is a precious American principle which protects us all, both religious and nonbelievers."

Florida judge removed from bench

The Florida Supreme Court on Oct. 30 removed Judith Hawkins from her position as a Leon County judge for selling religious books from her office as part of her for-profit Christian ministry, The Associated Press reported.

The court said Hawkins was deceitful and dishonest at her disciplinary hearing before the Judicial Qualifications Commission. She was also accused of using her county email account, judicial assistant and her office spaces and equipment to create, edit and promote Gaza Road Ministry products "to the detriment of the prompt and efficient administration of justice."

Her annual judge's salary was \$142,000.

Devil blamed for commandments crash

Michael Tate Reed Jr., 29, allegedly told federal authorities that Satan told him to drive his car into a Ten Commandments monument Oct. 23 at the Oklahoma Capitol. Reed was charged with destruction of state property/improvements, indecent exposure, making threatening statements, reckless driving and operating a vehicle with a revoked license. The monument was toppled about 9 p.m.

An American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit challenging the monument, donated by state Rep. Mike Ritze, R-Broken Arrow, was dismissed in September, but the ACLU is appealing to the state Supreme Court.

Meet an M.D. member

Name: Paul D. Redleaf, M.D.

Where I live: Lilydale, Minn., across the Mississippi from Saint Paul.

Where and when I was born: New York City, April 24, 1931.

Family: My wife, Rhoda, two sons and two daughters and their spouses, five grandsons, two granddaughters and one great-granddaughter.

Education: Great Neck High School, valedictorian, 1948; Cornell University, zoology and general studies, 1951; Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, 1955; internships and residencies, University of Minnesota, 1955-57. 1958-61.

Occupation: Internal medicine private practice in Saint Paul, 1961-80, part time 1980-83. Member, Chicago Board Options Exchange (trader in put and call options).

Military service: Captain, U.S. Army, 1957-59, serving at Fort Knox, Ky.

How I got where I am today: (1) A great deal of good luck, healthwise and escaping the dangers of financial disaster on the CBOE. (2) Making the best possible choice in marrying Rhoda, a wonderful wife and absolutely perfect mother and grandmother. (3) Good decisions to leave the medical practice and options trading while ahead, and entrusting all my savings to my son Andy's management.

Where I'm headed: Obviously, at 83, downhill. Hearing is going, no longer skiing but still playing singles tennis with buddies 10 years younger. Hoping to live out the years without dementia and eventually a good death, unburdensome to me and my family.

Person in history I admire: Obviously there are many, but I cast a vote for Wisconsin's Russ Feingold, the only senator to vote against the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001.

A quotation I like: "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread." (Anatole France)

These are a few of my favorite things: Travel (having seen most of the U.S. and a good chunk of the world), classical music, good nonfiction books and periodicals

These are not: Noisy restaurants.

My doubts about religion started: While reading the biblical Book of Job in freshman English at Cornell. If there's a God who can treat Job as he treats him, he doesn't deserve worship. And the state of the world demonstrates that if there is a God, he is neither all-wise or all-just.

Before I die: I'd like to see some very bad actors on the Supreme Court gone and a Republican Party which



Paul and Rhoda Redleaf are longtime life partners.

could include someone like the late Jacob Javits, a U.S. senator from New York from 1957-81. (I still consider myself a Javits Republican.)

Ways I promote freethought: We've promoted freethought in our family. One daughter is a virulent anti-capitalist, and a son, to our chagrin, was a

founder of the Federalist Society. [Editor's note: Paul modestly doesn't mention his and Rhoda's ongoing, generous endowment of the Redleaf Internship Fund, formerly at Carleton College, and now Sarah Lawrence, which allows FFRF and other select nonprofits to employ summer interns.]

Meet FFRF’s Board & State Representatives



FFRF’s Executive Board, pictured at its preconvention meeting Oct. 24 at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles: (front, left) Director Joe Cunningham, Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor, Director Mike Cermak; (back) Director and outgoing Treasurer Jim Zerwick, Chair Stephen Hirtle, Director Todd Peissig and incoming Treasurer Steve Salemsen. Not pictured are Secretary Jim Bredeson, Director Patricia Cleveland and outgoing Director Phyllis Rose. Warmest thanks to Phyllis, who retired in October as a director, for her years of volunteer work and wise counsel.



State Representatives at the annual post-convention meeting Oct. 26 in Los Angeles: (front, left) Todd Peissig, Wis.; Nick Sheridan, Md.; Sheri Bender, Ind.; Cheryl Kolbe, Ore; Fairfid Caudle, N.Y.; Dianne Cooper, Iowa; Wayne Bartz, Calif., (back) Annie Laurie Gaylor, Wis., Sheridan Chapin, N.Y., Steve Aldrich, Tenn.; Steve Trunk, Calif.; Darrell Barker, Wash.; Dick Hewetson, Calif.; Michael Jacobson, Nev.; Charles Bender, Ind.; Gary Stormo, S.D.; Robin Buckallew, Neb.; Michael Garstin, Texas; Bonnie Stormo, S.D.; Sheri Bender, Ind; Mike Cermak, Pa.; Dan Barker, Wis.; Steve Salemsen, Wis.; Jim Zerwick, Wis.; Kevin Gough, Conn.; and Stephen Hirtle, Pa.

Photography by Ingrid Laas

Godless money drawing ‘clean’ fun



Two 17-year-olds, Ife Kuchler, Calif., and Maria Mancini, Pa., did the honors of drawing winners for FFRF’s annual “clean money” raffle to win from \$1 to \$100 in pre-“In God We Trust” currency. Photo: Andrew Seidel



Conducting the drawing were FFRF staffer Katie Daniel with helpers Maria Mancini and Ife Kuchler and Buzz Kemper, announcer of Freethought Radio.



Maria reads a winning ticket.

And the winners are . . .



James Miller, Calif., shows off his four prizes: two “clean” 1935 \$1 bills (one donated by Diane Oxley, N.C.), a \$20 1950A bill (donated by Grant Hazel, Calif.); and the grand prize \$100 bill, 1929 series (donated by Michael Jacobson, Nev.).



Happy winners of the 2014 FFRF “clean” money drawing, proving U.S. currency used to be entirely secular: (left) Charlene Couch, Md., accepting on behalf of Sharon Thomson — \$2 1953B (donated by John Frank); Larry Sugarman, Calif. — \$1 1935A; Rob Hayworth, Md. — \$1 1935 series; Joy Meininger, Calif. — \$10 1950E (donated by Warren Smith, N.Y.); Robert Zadra, Calif. — \$5 1953C (donated by Dennis Anderson and Deanna Sewell, Ore.); Mary Riley Sanders, Ga., — \$50 1934A (donated by Dr. D.A. Rickards, Ohio); John Steinberg, M.D., Md. — \$1 1934 series.