

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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

July 14, 2011

The Honorable Scott Walker
115 East Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

We have received a complaint from a concerned Wisconsin resident, and are also writing on behalf of Wisconsin citizens and members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) about a serious state/church violation on the State of Wisconsin website. FFRF is a national organization, which represents 16,500 members across the country, including over 1,300 members in Wisconsin. Our purpose is to protect and enforce the constitutional separation of state and church and represent the views of nonbelieving Americans.

The State of Wisconsin website (www.wisconsin.gov) has inappropriate links to external websites for more "information" on family services. It has come to our attention that the State of Wisconsin links directly to a religious, anti-abortion organization. Upon further research, it is apparent that there is no information on abortion, which is a constitutional right protected under *Roe v. Wade*, as a legitimate option for a pregnant woman through the Family Services Links.

One of the links under "Health & Safety" and "Family Services Links" leads to the Care Net organization. This is a foundation whose mission statement is "Care Net is a Christ-centered ministry whose mission is to promote a culture of life within our society in order to serve people facing unplanned pregnancies and related sexual issues." This mission statement clearly declares that this is a Christian ministry. It is troubling that a government-issued website would lead a citizen to this page. Care Net promotes a rabid evangelical Christian agenda, and is hostile to nonbelievers, non-Christians and non-evangelicals, as well as the feminist principle of a woman's right to reproductive self-determination.

Care Net's Vision statement does reads: "Our vision is a culture where lives are transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and every woman chooses life for herself and her unborn child." By advertising this organization on a State of Wisconsin website, you are advertising evangelical ideals as well as an anti-abortion stance. Such religious propaganda has no place on a government website under "Health & Safety."

Below is a list of the values to which the Care-Net organization adheres:

In the Name of Christ, Care Net Abides by the Following Values:

VALUE 1

UNITY IN CHRIST

We value our foundational belief in Christ as our Savior & Salvation.

VALUE 2

EVANGELISM

We are committed to demonstrating the transforming grace & redemptive power of Jesus Christ & sharing His Gospel through word & deed.

VALUE 3

SANCTITY OF LIFE

We believe that God values all life & has a plan & purpose for every person's life, including unborn life.

VALUE 4

CULTURE OF LIFE

As believers, we value life & are dedicated to promoting a culture of life to people facing unplanned pregnancies & other related sexual issues.

VALUE 5

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

We value leading others through authentic relationships, integrity, & giving oneself to meet the needs of others & equipping them to succeed.

VALUE 6

MINISTRY THROUGH SERVICE

We value ministry expressed tangibly through our service to others.

VALUE 7

PARTNERSHIPS

We value our partnerships in mission with other believers & organizations that support a culture of life.

VALUE 8

INTEGRITY & STEWARDSHIP

We are committed to conducting ourselves with transparency as faithful, responsible stewards of God's provisions.

VALUE 9

CHRIST CENTERED STAFF

We value maintaining an environment in which staff freely expresses their love of & devotion to Christ & strive for excellence in all that they do.

VALUE 10

INTEGRITY IN FUNDRAISING

We value honesty, integrity & accountability to our donors to ensure prudent, effective, & efficient use of the funds they have generously provided.

The state-linked website further reports that it has adapted a statement of faith from National Association of Evangelicals (a separate organization which takes pride in their Government relations, "Bringing biblical values to the political sphere"). This statement of faith is as follows:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential, and that this salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and not as a result of good works.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life and to perform good works.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

No state government office should have any affiliation with a group that has a "Statement of Faith."

The Care Net organization, by its own description on the website, is "committed to expanding access to the life-saving services and support provided by our local centers and to reaching the hurting and broken with the hope of Jesus Christ." The website also quotes from Isaiah 61:1 ("He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from the darkness for the prisoners. . .") and I Corinthians 12:4-5 ("There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord."). It also speaks to its effects on the community in a religious sense: "The hearts of women and men are being changed by Christ's love to desire positive and healthy choices. In addition, those struggling with past abortions are finding God's healing and forgiveness." This language is exclusionary, offensive to non-believers as well as those of other faiths and past abortion patients, and should not be linked or promoted by the State of Wisconsin.

It is a fundamental principle of Establishment Clause jurisprudence that the government cannot in any way promote, advance, or otherwise endorse religion. Therefore, it is very inappropriate to have religious links on the State of Wisconsin's website. By leading citizens to pervasively sectarian religious organizations, the State of Wisconsin appears to endorse religion over non-religion, and specifically prefers evangelical Christianity over all other faiths. This is a direct violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

We are aware the State of Wisconsin issues a so-called "Disclaimer for external links" denying that any link "constitutes an endorsement from the State." But in fact the link by

the State of Wisconsin to a pervasively sectarian antiabortion group does constitute recognized endorsement. There is no required separation between state and some family services, but the First Amendment dictates there must be a separation between the state and pervasively sectarian organizations.

Also to be addressed is the additional faith-based propaganda listed on the website of links for Family Services. The entire website has an abstinence-only agenda to prevent teen pregnancy. There is no information on contraception in any of the links listed. More specifically, the list of links also contains the Brighter Futures Initiative. This is an act put forth by the State to improve the well-being of families across Wisconsin. One of the "legislative outcomes" this program supports is the push to "Prevent and reduce the incidence of non-marital pregnancy and increase the use of abstinence to prevent non-marital pregnancy...." This is a faith-based policy that also has no place in a Governmental setting. There is no information on contraception for teenagers or pre-marital couples.

Please immediately remove the link to the Care Net organization and any other religious propaganda from the state's website.

We request a prompt response from you, in writing, informing us of the steps the State of Wisconsin will take to resolve this matter and comply with the dictates of the First Amendment. Our complainant awaits your action.

Yours truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-President