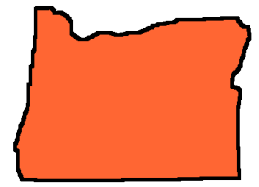


# Willamette Freethinker



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Corvallis Secular Society (CSS) is a Humanist and Freethought society for all nontheists of good will.

CSS is affiliated with the American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH).

## From the Editor: Reasoning it out...

I keep trying to understand The Human Condition.

I just... take the whole thing in, stand back, and try to make sense of it all. Does anyone else ever do this?

I've done this ever since I can remember. When I was in second grade (or so), in the private Jewish elementary school my folks sent me to (so as to avoid inner city Houston public schools), I used to have trouble in Hebrew class. I remember thinking Hebrew was stupid. I thought, why would anyone speak or write in another language, when you have to translate it to English in order to understand it?

And I clearly remember one day, reasoning it out. Hebrew is a language. English is a language. Why isn't English hard? Because you don't have to translate it. I GET IT! Other people are "born speaking" Hebrew! They don't HAVE to translate it to English! For them, ENGLISH is the "hard" language...

Yeah, I know, it sounds retarded NOW, but I actually reasoned it out at a young age. I needed to MAKE SENSE of it.

These days, I keep trying to reason out religion.

I've got a strong intuitive grasp of how religion started. Even animals are capable of learning things. My beagle Buttercup knows full well that when she goes potty OUTSIDE, she gets a treat. She doesn't ask WHY — but knowing this, she alters her behavior so as to get more treats!

As humans evolved, we slowly became more intelligent; more aware. Intelligence was our main asset. Understanding became important to our survival.

We started to ask WHY.

Now unfortunately, the world is a complicated place. Many things of vital interest, don't readily reveal their secrets to the first minds that ask "why". Why does lightning strike? Why does thunder roar? Why do volcanoes erupt?

Our first attempts at answering these questions, were simply by intuition. Thunder and lightning feel angry, like

when my fellow human growls and throws a rock. Maybe thunder and lightning are made by bigger, stronger people!

Once that thought occurs, it doesn't take much to start wondering how to keep those big, strong people from getting angry so much. Before long, people who thought about such things started explaining to others what they intuitively knew — and thus the priest class was born.

People started modifying their behavior according to what the priests said, and the priests discovered that the stronger and angrier the "gods" were, the more power the priests held over everyone else — and thus religion was born.

How religion got STARTED is an easy question. It's a natural perversion of our earliest attempts at understanding the world. But we have better tools now; why do people STILL cling to nonsensical beliefs?

Part of me knows it's just a combination of fear, stupidity, and wishful thinking. But I can't help it; I still want it to make SENSE...

*Reed Byers*

Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

## CSS Meetings and Events

### Calendar:

Saturday, Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Apr 18 <sup>th</sup>	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting

### Regular meeting time:

Third Saturday of each month, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

### Regular meeting location:

Corl House (3975 NW Witham Hill Dr, Corvallis).

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# From the President:

## Random Eyes: Glances at Recent News Reports

The inauguration of President Barack Obama presents new opportunities for the promotion of Humanist values. These include democracy, respect for the Constitution, openness in government, a secular government and society, equal rights for all citizens, respect for science, the use of negotiation in preference to war, environmental and human population issues, a sustainable energy supply, education, healthcare, and compassion for all.

I sometimes submit brief comments to online news articles, and have recently begun sending comments to the White House at <http://www.whitehouse.gov>. Herewith, for your possible interest, are some recent remarks:

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### Oath flub merits a do-over, scholars say

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article/article?f=/c/a/2009/01/20/MNAF15E20I.DTL>

This article from the website of the San Francisco Chronicle reports that some constitutional lawyers have argued that Obama should take his oath over, as both the Chief Justice and the President flubbed their lines.

Writing as Yaquina132, I responded on 1/20/09, 10:47 PM:

Article II of the US Constitution specifies the oath or affirmation required of the President: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." This oath contains no "so help me god" phrase. Nor does the Constitution call for the use of a bible. These additions — changing the oath — are unconstitutional. They are also inappropriate, as they violate the revolutionary founding principle of the separation of government and religion. Ours is a secular society; the President is a secular leader, not a religious leader. The President should be the leader of all Americans, not just religious Americans. The President indeed should take this oath — for the first time.

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### Ill. governor wants to speak at impeachment trial

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article/comments/view?f=/n/a/2009/01/25/national/a125531S85.DTL&o=1>

Writing as Yaquina132, I responded on 1/27/09, 11:18AM:

The real message Blagojevich is sending to his children is that, as a public servant, it is acceptable to violate the public trust and the law. Further, if caught, it is acceptable to lie, to blame others, and to refuse to take responsibility for one's actions.

### Facing the facts on school closures

[http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2009/01/facing\\_the\\_facts\\_on\\_school\\_clo.html#preview](http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2009/01/facing_the_facts_on_school_clo.html#preview)

Writing as Yaquina132, I responded on 1/27/09, 9:23 PM:

Before we consider raising taxes in any form, let's get those that underpay or don't pay at all to do their share. Without Constitutional justification, churches and other religious institutions get a free ride. (Who pays for their police, fire, and military protection, etc.? You do.) Surely it's time for religious groups to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" (as they are commanded to do). Why are they the least willing in our society to help pay for the services of government, such as education?

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### Court says private [religious] school can expel lesbians

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article/comments/view?f=/c/a/2009/01/27/BAB615IA5R.DTL&o=1>

Writing as Yaquina132, I responded on 1/29/09, 11:42 PM:

How typical of religious institutions: they are always the first to discriminate — the first to hate — even as they proclaim that religion is necessary for morality! If they are allowed to discriminate, then they certainly should lose the public support of tax exemption.

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### Debate over 'buy American' in stimulus

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article/comments/view?f=/c/a/2009/02/02/MNP215LLOC.DTL&o=1>

Writing as Yaquina132, I responded on 2/2/09, 11:59 PM:

Here's a suggestion that will continue international trade while restoring jobs for Americans: We buy no more from any country than they buy from us.

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### My Letter to President Obama

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>  
(click on Contact Us, upper right):

Jan 21: Pres. Obama's proclamation, "A National Day of Renewal and Reconciliation," refers to "an awesome God" and "a purpose for everything under heaven." Our Constitution requires the separation of government and religion — in the words of Pres. Jefferson, "a wall of separation between church and State." In his official duties, the President is called upon by the Constitution, and by common decency, to leave out statements of religious dogma, thus being inclusive of our nation's diverse citizenry.

Jan 22: President Obama, please end the U.S. embargo on Cuba, and normalize relations. Also close the entire U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay — not just the prison camp for suspected terrorists. The base should be returned to Cuba, its rightful owner. We have no business being bullies by maintaining a base in a country where it's not welcome. How would we in America feel if a foreign country maintained a base in our country against our will?

Feb 4: Your recently-announced salary cap of \$500,000 for top executives at companies that receive the largest amounts of money under the \$700 billion federal bailout is encouraging. But half a million dollars a year is still an obscene pay for anyone, especially for those receiving taxpayer-provided bailouts. I suggest a nationwide upper pay limit tied to the federal minimum wage — say five times the minimum wage. (Think how quickly the minimum wage would go up!)

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I encourage Humanists and all others of good will to take advantage of the great political change that has taken place in the United States. Any way you can, encourage our leaders, and all our citizens, to reverse the tide of the past eight years by restoring democracy, and by creating a society based on reason and compassion.

*John Dearing*  
President of CSS

**I decided (after listening to a “talk radio” commentator who abused, vilified, and scorned every noble cause to which I had devoted my entire life that) I was both a Humanist and a liberal, each of the most dangerous and vilified type.**

**I am a Humanist because I think humanity can, with constant moral guidance, create a reasonably decent society. I am terrified of restrictive religious doctrine, having learned from history that when men who adhere to any form of it are in control, common men like me are in peril. I do not believe that pure reason can solve the perceptual problems unless it is modified by poetry and art and social vision. So I am a Humanist.**

**And if you want to charge me with being the most virulent kind — a secular humanist — I accept the accusation.**

— James Michener, Interview,  
*Parade Magazine* (Nov. 24, 1991)

## A Statement on Darwin

by CSS member Don Boucher  
[www.neighborhood-naturalist.com](http://www.neighborhood-naturalist.com)

I am a naturalist, both in the philosophical sense (in that nothing exists outside of nature) and the hobbyist sense (someone who enjoys the study of nature). Darwin's contribution to biologic theory is profound. Evolution by natural selection is the grand story of life that makes nature real and fascinating.

I am a naturalist for two primary reasons. First, I think natural things, plants, birds, mammals, bugs and such are interesting. I love to find them, look at them and identify them. For this reason nature is interesting to anybody, including creationists.

Second, I like the puzzles in nature. This is what keeps me interested and makes my little hobby relevant on a grand scale. We get distracted by the fundamentalists of the Abrahamic religions. What about the many other creation myths? Unfortunately, they all have one thing in common. They render the “who, what, when, how and why” in nature nearly irrelevant since living things came about by the will of some deity. Charles Darwin, Alfred Russell Wallace and the many scientists to follow in their footsteps gave us a reason to look into nature and solve problems by learning as much as we can. Charles Darwin's scientific revolution gave naturalists like me a valid reason to explore the details of living things. I learn about nature because it gives me insight into the bigger picture of life. From a religious or an Intelligent Design perspective, the bigger picture has been figured out by an imaginary personality. Why bother solving puzzles in nature if we should then focus on the intentions of an unseen deity, of whom by many traditions, is unknowable? I'm interested in nature in its raw form, the way it is, without judgment or conjecture.

Well, biologists haven't figured everything out about nature yet. And they never will. But, biology gets clearer and more interesting year by year.

Thanks to Charles Darwin for giving me a passion to press on and learn more!

**Paul Krugman says Democrats need to make it clear they value faith. Is everyone caving in to this religious nonsense? What is faith but believing in something without any evidence? Why should Democrats value that?**

**Formidable as the task may seem at present, the long-term need is to persuade Americans that having evidence for your beliefs is a good idea.**

— Peter Singer, letter,  
*New York Times*, Nov. 8, 2004

# First Steps on a Long Road

## by William Rivers Pitt, Truthout.org, 1/23/2009

**It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad.**

— C.S. Lewis

So Bush is out and Obama is in and change has come, and you've probably read or heard this enough times already, so let's move on, because reality must sadly intrude.

Confronting every American citizen is the existence of three dominant factors which have become part of the nation's DNA over the course of the last century and a half. Each of these factors holds muscular sway over the doings of government and has a direct effect upon all our lives. None of them are going away any time soon, and that is fact.

One of these three is the existence of something called "corporate personhood," the legal theory established by a number of Supreme Court cases, including the 1886 *Santa Clara v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, which grants 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights to corporations. In essence, it is a legal shield that grants the same rights and privileges of citizenry enjoyed by you and me to faceless, on-paper corporate constructs. This has given rise to what can only be described as corporate super-citizens, entities with our rights but with the enormous financial ability to press, and indeed distort, those rights for their own purposes.

Another factor we currently endure is the lingering existence and aftereffect of the establishment of legalized political bribery, best represented by the 1976 Supreme Court decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*. In short, due to decisions like the one in *Buckley*, the payment of millions of dollars to political parties and candidates amounts to "free speech." Combined with the existence of corporate personhood, the result was corporate super-citizens pressing their "rights" by purchasing politics wholesale. Corporations seeking the dismantling of media ownership rules, the deregulation of banking and financial strictures, and the denuding of environmental protections merely purchased enough politicians via "free speech" contributions, and they got what they wanted.

The third factor takes us all the way back to World War II, and is where the confluence of those first two factors truly came together to form a juggernaut that marks every part of our national landscape. In order to gear up for the kind of colossal manufacturing output required to defeat two massive military powers on opposite ends of the globe, President Roosevelt placed our national economy on a wartime footing. With the establishment of the Truman Doctrine to confront Soviet communism, and the passage

of the National Security Act in 1947, America's wartime economic footing became a permanent thing that remains at the nucleus of our national economy to this day.

Put plainly, much of the health of the American economy today requires the permanent preparation for and fighting of wars. The corporate persons who profit from defense spending have made sure, by way of their "free speech" spending on pet politicians and acquirement of major media outlets, that nothing interferes with the financial processes of this arrangement. Their politicians and media spokesmen terrify the people with the golems of imminent national doom, the money rolls in, and the world gets more dangerous by the day.

These three legs are the tripod upon which our national reality currently stands, and not to put too fine a point on it, but President Barack Hussein Obama isn't going to put even a tiny dent in the way things are. No president can, not completely, and certainly not now. Fixing this self-destructive arrangement cannot be accomplished in one fell swoop, but will require the slow, steady, patient dedication of a lifetime... along with victories in many more elections to come, of course.

That sounds terribly depressing, and it is, but there's also this.

President Obama's plans to stimulate the economy and create new jobs will give needed tax breaks to a lot of people who really need them, not just to the people who really want them, and there is a world of difference between the two. Our national infrastructure and technological capacities will be greatly enhanced, and the current economic slump will be blunted when all those new paychecks start to flow in the proper direction. President Obama's plans are far from flawless, but they represent a strong move in the direction of helping working- and middle-class Americans who have spent the last eight years being roundly ignored.

President Obama's first official act in office was to repair the damage done by the Bush administration's wildly devious and dishonest practices. As Dan Froomkin reported in *The Washington Post* on Thursday, "Obama issued three memos: one establishes bold new rules regarding transparency and open government; another instructs executive-branch officials who enforce the Freedom of Information Act to err on the side of making materials public rather than looking for reasons to legally withhold them; and the third freezes pay of White House staffers making over \$100,000. He also signed two executive orders: one establishing strict ethics rules for his political appointees and another making presidential records more accessible."

President Obama has ordered the closing of America's detention center in Guantanamo Bay, and has ordered the end of the use of torture against detainees. As Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball reported in Time on Thursday, "In perhaps his most far-reaching and potentially controversial move, Obama ordered that the CIA immediately cease using any interrogation techniques that are not already authorized in the Army Field Manual. He also ordered the CIA to close, 'as expeditiously as possible,' any secret detention facilities overseas and begin immediate compliance with Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits 'humiliating and degrading' treatment of prisoners."

The import of these latest moves by President Obama was best detailed by Glenn Greenwald, who wrote, "Barack Obama will have spent his first several days in office issuing a series of executive orders which, some quibbling and important caveats aside, meet or actually exceed even the most optimistic expectations of civil libertarians — everything from ordering the closing of Guantanamo to suspending military commissions to compelling CIA interrogators to adhere to the Army Field Manual to banning CIA "black sites" and, perhaps most encouragingly (in my view): severely restricting his own power and the power of former presidents to withhold documents on the basis of secrecy, which has been the prime corrosive agent of the Bush era."

Finally, science has been rescued from the dungeon of Bush administration idiocy. The Financial Times reported on Friday that, "US regulators have approved the first use of embryonic stem cells in humans. The move raises the prospect of a groundbreaking approach to medical treatment that had been blocked since 2001 by George W. Bush as president. Just two days after the inauguration of President Barack Obama, who opposed his predecessor's ban on federal funding for embryonic stem-cell research, the Food & Drug Administration authorised Geron, a US biotech company, to begin clinical trials for patients with severe spinal cord injuries." For millions of Americans who suffer from diabetes, multiple sclerosis and other debilitating maladies, the promise of stem cell research cannot be overstated.

The big stuff isn't fixed, and fixing it all will require a great deal of hard work, patience, perseverance and electoral diligence from all of us. In the meantime, torture has been abolished, secrecy has been curtailed, the rule of law has been buttressed, and the national economic crisis will soon be addressed.

We're at the beginning again, and moving in the right direction. The final resolution, in every meaningful sense, depends almost entirely on us.

## Obama Speaks at National Prayer Breakfast

<http://friendlyatheist.com/2009/02/06/obama-mentions-non-believers-once-again/>

[Editor's Note: *The following are excerpts from Obama's speech during the "National Prayer Breakfast" on February 5, 2009.*]

There is no doubt that the very nature of faith means that some of our beliefs will never be the same. We read from different texts. We follow different edicts. We subscribe to different accounts of how we came to be here and where we're going next — and some subscribe to no faith at all.

...

We know too that whatever our differences, there is one law that binds all great religions together. Jesus told us to "love thy neighbor as thyself." The Torah commands, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow." In Islam, there is a hadith that reads "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." And the same is true for Buddhists and Hindus; for followers of Confucius and for humanists. It is, of course, the Golden Rule — the call to love one another; to understand one another; to treat with dignity and respect those with whom we share a brief moment on this Earth.

...

The goal of this office [Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships] will not be to favor one religious group over another — or even religious groups over secular groups. It will simply be to work on behalf of those organizations that want to work on behalf of our communities, and to do so without blurring the line that our founders wisely drew between church and state. This work is important, because whether it's a secular group advising families facing foreclosure or faith-based groups providing job-training to those who need work, few are closer to what's happening on our streets and in our neighborhoods than these organizations. People trust them. Communities rely on them. And we will help them.

### Some thoughts from FriendlyAtheist.com:

I'm sure many atheists will be mad that Obama is speaking at a National Prayer Breakfast in the first place. They'll be upset that he used us as an afterthought on lists of religions — so many of which have hurt our friends and family.

But it's an important step. Let's get the nation used to hearing atheists (or some variant) included in lists of who Americans are.

Then, let's back his words up with our own actions. That's how movements happen.

# Newspaper Letters

Corvallis Gazette-Times 01/22/2009

## Marriage primarily is a legal contract, not a religious one

I agree with Robert G. Gourley's Jan. 19 letter, when he speaks of the "good sense" of the policy of separating church and state. But the problem is not to be solved by "getting government out of the marriage business." Precisely the contrary.

Marriage is a contract between two people, and as such is first and foremost a matter of law.

Other countries, France among them, have worked this out quite satisfactorily: The only marriage that counts is the civil ceremony. Without that, a couple is not married. If they wish subsequently to have a religious ceremony, that is their choice and their business, but it is not obligatory.

**Carleton W. Carroll,**  
Corvallis

Corvallis Gazette-Times 02/02/2009

## Real science depends on facts

Pat Burrell ("Global warming turns into jobs program", Letters, Jan. 25) thinks that a previous letter writer (Andreas Schmittner, a "liberal scientist") lacks credibility, in part because he has only 10 years' experience.

A quick web search shows that Dr. Schmittner works in the field of climate change and has published dozens of peer-reviewed articles in many of the most respected science journals. That is, his scientific peers deem that his work is rigorously argued and that other scientists need to know of it.

A web search for Mr. Burrell finds no such information. His public contribution to science is to pass along undocumented claims about Al Gore's alleged lack of discussion with senior scientists and to tell us that most energy comes from the sun.

What is this about? Mr. Burrell and others "do" science by defining an outcome (e.g., no tax dollars for environmental research, no constraints on business or consumption), then cherry-picking from unreviewed sources to support that outcome.

In contrast, scientists work out what the facts and physical principles tell us to expect. With the facts on the table, everyone can discuss what to do about it, if anything.

We desperately need to move on to the second step, a public debate about the choices we face as climate will change over the next century. Mr. Burrell may be on the "winning" side of history — as a society it seems likely

that we will choose to ignore the long-term cost of climate change and other environmental stresses for the assumed health of the economy — but we should be making this decision on facts, not viral gossip.

**Laurence Padman,**  
Corvallis

Corvallis Gazette-Times 02/04/2009

## To be legal, marriage must be secular

In her Feb. 2 letter, Joan Wheeler makes a great proposal about coming up with a new name for gay marriage, but doesn't go far enough. I have a better system: Everyone who hates the idea of gays having equal rights can have "fake marriages," whereas everyone else can have "real marriages." After all, they're just words, right? Surely any objection would expose the idea's hypocrisy.

Apparently Joan also doesn't understand what a "fact" is. The reality is that the Roman Catholic Church is so named because it was founded in the days of the Roman empire, around 300 CE — the Council of Nicea, in 325 CE, is a reasonable point to claim it existed by, and it certainly existed by 380, when it was formally adopted as the sole religion of the Empire.

Not every culture defines marriage as between a man and a woman. Indeed, the very fact that gays (and many straights) call two gays getting married a marriage means our own culture defines it as simply a contract between two people.

The United States government must, in fact, respect the separation of church and state, per the First and 14th amendments to the Constitution. We cannot make any law on the basis of religion. As marriage is a legal contract, defining it in religious terms is unconstitutional. Ergo, if marriage is to be respected by the state, it must be a secular, purely legal institution, open to all.

**Nathan Merrill,**  
Philomath

Corvallis Gazette-Times 02/07/2009

## Words exist to describe restrictive majority

In response to Joan Wheeler's biblical "facts" and "statistics" about marriage and separation of church and state in her Feb. 3 letter, allow me to quote a different biblical scholar, Lynn Lavner: "The bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals and 362 to heterosexuals. This doesn't mean God doesn't love heterosexuals; they just require more supervision."

I don't believe, as Ms. Wheeler suggests, that we need a new special word to describe gay couples' relationships that means the same thing as marriage. Domestic partnerships and civil unions are not legally equivalent to marriage and no amount of intellectually dishonest wishful thinking will make them so.

We do, however, have words to describe the behavior of the majority in a society that refuses basic human rights, such as marriage, to a minority while reserving those rights solely for the majority: prejudice, unearned privilege and bigotry.

Steven Leider,  
Corvallis

Corvallis Gazette-Times 02/11/2009

### Cut on the hand leads to shocking encounter with medical costs

Recently while attempting to move an upright piano, I suffered a large cut on the pad of my thumb. It required stitches.

This happened on a Sunday night, so the only place open to get stitches was the emergency room. I was in the hospital for a total of one hour, and maybe seen by a doctor for a total of 20 minutes, tops. I don't have health insurance partially because I'm not a student, and I can't be covered under my parents plan.

I finally got my bill (or should I say bills) in the mail, and I was shocked: The emergency room bill was around \$670, and the doctor bill was \$654, for a total of \$1,324.

After applying for medical assistance, I was notified that I would not receive any because I am "above poverty." Another interesting part of this: I talked to my father, and he informed me that if I was under his insurance plan that the bill would've been \$1,200 because that's his deductible. Therefore, this situation did not encourage me to get insurance at all; it more convinced me to never go to the hospital again.

I figured out that it would have been cheaper for me to fly back east to get treated by my uncle. I wonder how it is to make \$2,000 an hour; my bill for the doctor alone was \$654, and I only saw him for 20 minutes. The bad thing is, I'm sure my scenario isn't even close to the worst case happening in our country.

Lisa Hargest,  
Corvallis

## Is the Stimulus Anti-Christian?

by Alex Koppelman, Salon.com, 2/6/2009

Some elements on the right have found something new to complain about in the stimulus: They're criticizing one specific provision in the bill, which they say discriminates against religion, and they're hopping mad about it. The rhetoric on the subject isn't exactly moderate, either — the front page of the Fox News Web site, which published an article on the topic, has the headline, "Stimulus a War on Prayer?"

"What the government is doing is discriminating against religious viewpoints," Mathew Staver, the founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, told Fox. "President Obama's version of faith-based initiatives is to remove the faith from initiative... He is not the infallible messiah that some thought he would be."

Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) told the Christian Broadcasting Network, "Democrats are looking for every opportunity to purge faith and prayer from the public square. This will empower the ACLU with ambiguous laws that create liability for schools, universities, and student organizations. This is an attack on people of faith and I don't think Americans will stand for it." His spokesman, Wesley Denton, went even further, saying, "[A]ny school that gets funds to upgrade a student center or building where Bible studies or religious meetings may be held will be slapped with a lawsuit. This bill declares a war on prayer at college campuses in this country."

Staver, DeMint, Denton and a slew of other people on the right are angry about one specific piece of language in the bill. In the Senate version, the language is:

**No funds awarded under this section may be used for... modernization, renovation, or repair of facilities (i) used for sectarian instruction, religious worship, or a school or department of divinity; or (ii) in which a substantial portion of the functions of the facilities are subsumed in a religious mission.**

Turns out that this sort of language is actually absolutely standard, as both the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State pointed out to Fox. Moreover, the Supreme Court saw absolutely no problem with it as far back as 1971. And the language doesn't prohibit funds from going to religious schools; it just means they can't spend it on any facilities used primarily for religious purposes. Nor would it mean that public schools would have to keep things like Bible studies out of any buildings renovated with stimulus funding. This isn't some secret, either — it's legal principle dating back decades.

# America

## Sinfest comics by Tatsuya Ishida



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