



Ethical Action Report



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Separation of Church and State: Take a Stand Against Religious Tests for Leaders

Article VI, section 3 of the United States Constitution states that: "...no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." CNN seems to have missed the memo.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Constitution explicitly states that there shall be no religious test for leaders of our country. But you wouldn't know it if you watch CNN. At a recent joint-CNN/Sojourners Democratic presidential forum, presidential candidates from Senator Clinton to Governor Bill Richardson were asked about their faith, including questions about the content of prayers and about committing sins.

These kinds of questions are completely inappropriate in a presidential race. Yet it's become increasingly acceptable to quiz presidential candidates about such deeply personal matters as a test of their competency for office. The Interfaith Alliance has

launched a campaign to steer the conversation about faith back to where it rightly belongs.

ACTION

The Interfaith Alliance is going to submit one of 5 Questions via YouTube and wants you to do the same! All you have to do is pick a question, personalize it, and then post it:

1. What role should and does your religious faith and values play in creating public policy?
2. What are your views on the Constitutional guarantee of the separation of church and state?
3. What active steps have you taken and will you continue to take to show respect for the variety of religious beliefs among your constituents?
4. Should a political leader's use of religious language reflect the language of his/her religious tradition, or be more broadly inclusive?
5. How do you balance the principles of your faith and your pledge to defend the Constitution, particularly when the two come into conflict?

To learn more about how to submit your video visit www.YouTube.com/Debates. Then, fill out The Interfaith Alliance's YouTube debate form so they can provide a link to your video. Find the form at www.interfaithalliance.org.

Reproductive Freedom: Support the Global Democracy Promotion Act

The Global Democracy Promotion Act has been introduced in the Senate by Barbara Boxer (D-CA) with Olympia Snowe (R-ME) as an original cosponsor. This bill would repeal the Global Gag Rule, a disastrous international policy that hurts women and families by withholding vital services and information regarding reproduction and choice.

BACKGROUND

The Global Gag Rule is a policy that denies USAID family planning funds to non-governmental organizations that provide abortion services, lobby their governments for abortion law reform, or provide accurate medical counseling regarding abortion, *even if these groups do so using their own private funds*.

The Global Gag Rule was enacted in 1984 under the Reagan Administration. It was ended by executive order during the Clinton years; however, President George W. Bush, as one of his first actions in the White House, re-imposed the Gag.

The U.S. Government should not be in the business of censoring accurate medical information and denying a medical procedure that saves lives: 78,000 women die every year from unsafe abortion. We need the Global Democracy Promotion Act now to put an end to this preventable tragedy.

ACTION

The Global Democracy Promotion Act needs co-sponsors! Please contact your Senators and ask them to co-sponsor this much-needed bill.

GLBT Equality: Stop the Anti-Gay Amendment to DC's Funding Bill

Rep. Virgil Goode (R-VA) has attached an amendment to the FY 08 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill that would ban the District of Columbia from using federal funds to provide employment benefits to domestic partners. This is a clear case of anti-gay rhetoric (80% of registered partners are gay) being peddled by our government.

BACKGROUND

The DC's Domestic Partner registry is open to same- and opposite-sex couples, and enshrines such partner rights as hospital visits, medical decisions, joint tax filings and inheritance rights amongst others. The program was designed with same-sex couples in mind, and has greatly extended the rights and benefits of those couples since its creation.

The District of Columbia receives about \$120 million per year in federal funds, and Rep. Goode's spiteful amendment means that none of this money can be used towards upholding the rights of same-sex couples that the elected, fair-minded officials of the District have given them. Congress should not have the discretion to weaken the programs of elected officials in Washington, DC based on a close-minded federal view.

ACTION

Please let your representative know that you will not stand for any hurtful and hateful votes on Washington, DC's funding bill.

Human Rights: Demand that Iran Stop the Execution of Children

Iran has executed more child offenders than any other country since 1990, and continues to do so. Yet the Iranian government has a clear duty under international law to put a stop to this depraved practice. Iran has ratified two core human rights treaties, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which explicitly forbid the imposition of the death penalty for crimes committed before the age of 18. It is time to put a stop to this barbaric practice.

BACKGROUND

The Islamic Republic of Iran has officially put to death 24 child offenders since 1990, 11 of whom were under the age of 18 at the time of their execution. 71 children are currently facing execution, though the real figure may be much higher as many death penalty cases are believed to go unreported.

Often these children are not given a fair trial, such as 17 year old Sa'id Qanbar Zahi, who was arrested, tried, sentenced and executed within the space of a few weeks, raising serious doubts as to whether Zahi was given time to mount any kind of meaningful defense. Then there was the case of Syed Mohammad Reza Mousavi, who was executed at the age of 20 for a crime he was accused of at 16. Under Iranian domestic law, Mousavi was entitled to be tried in a juvenile court, yet he was never afforded this right. Both the lower court and the Supreme Court acknowledged this fact, yet upheld the death sentence regardless. Both of these executions took place this year, emphasizing the fact that Iran continues to flout international law despite their claims to the contrary.

Amidst the horror of child executions, there are some positives. Campaigning for change both inside and outside Iran can make – and indeed has made – a real difference. Some members of the government and judiciary are believed to be in favor of at least reducing the number of offences for which children could be sentenced to death, if not abolishing child executions altogether. Progress, however, is painfully slow. Further pressure from campaigners would put pressure on the Iranian government to honor their commitments under international law and expedite the path of legislation designed to put an end to child executions.

ACTION

Write to Iranian authorities urging them to abide by the international human rights treaties they have ratified and to end the reprehensible practice of executing children:

Golam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the leader of the Iranian Parliament Majles-e Shura-ye Eslami
Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 646 1746
(Salutation: Dear Sir)

Contacting Elected Officials

White House

Mailing Address

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Phone Number

Comments: (202) 456-1111
Fax: (202) 456-2461

E-mail

President George W. Bush:
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Richard Cheney:
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

Congress

Mailing Address

United States Senate
or
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Phone Number

Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

E-mail

Visit www.senate.gov or www.house.gov to use your representatives' e-mail contact forms.

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