



Ethical Action Report



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Now that the Obama administration is in office, we must not let them forget the issues important to us. Below find four issues we hope the administration is addressing.

Civil Liberties: Support the State Secrets Protection Act of 2009 (H.R. 984).

Write to your representatives in Congress and urge them to become a co-sponsor of the State Secrets Protection Act of 2009 (H.R. 984), which would require judicial oversight of government claims of secrecy when those claims come into conflict with an individual's right to a fair trial.

BACKGROUND

The State Secrets Protection Act of 2009 (H.R. 984), introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in February, is an essential bill that would require a court to make an independent assessment of a claim of state secrets. This claim was frequently used and abused by the Bush administration as a justification to deny victims of government wrongdoing their day in court.

Sensitive national security information should be protected by the government, but this imperative must also be balanced with the need to protect basic civil liberties. The State Secrets Protection Act strikes this important balance. Show your support today by writing to your representatives!

Reproductive Freedom: End Funding for Abstinence-Only Education

Urge President Obama to make good on his promise to end programs that are ineffective and purely ideologically driven. Write a letter to the president asking him to end federal funding of abstinence-only-until-marriage education in the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget. Instead, money should be redirected to science-based comprehensive sexuality education.

BACKGROUND

More than \$1.3 billion has been spent on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs since the late 1990s. However, these programs have proven to be ineffective—teens who participate in these programs are not less likely to have sex than teens not in the program, and they are less likely to use contraception or get tested for STDs. Moreover, the programs are often factually inaccurate, censor important information, teach gender stereotypes and promote religion with federal money. Clearly, our tax dollars can and should be put to better use.

While we spend \$176 million annually on abstinence-only programs, there is currently no federal funding provided for comprehensive sexuality education—despite the fact that the public overwhelmingly supports it. It's time to end funding for abstinence-only education programs that don't work and instead support sexuality education that's science-based and equips teens with the knowledge they need to make responsible decisions. Ask President Obama to fund comprehensive sex education today.

Human Rights: Support Clemency for Troy Davis

Write to Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue and urge him to commute Troy Davis's death sentence.

Send letters to:

The Office of the Governor
State of Georgia
203 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

You may also contact the governor electronically:

http://gov.georgia.gov/00/gov/contact_us/0,2657,78006749_94820188,00.html

BACKGROUND

Troy Davis was sentenced to death in 1991 for the murder of Police Officer Mark Allen MacPhail, despite the fact that there was no physical evidence against him and the weapon used in the crime was never found. He was convicted based solely on eye-witness testimony—testimony many of those witnesses later stated in sworn affidavits was coerced by police. All but two of the witnesses have since recanted or contradicted their original testimony, and nine individuals have implicated Sylvester “Red” Coles—the principle alternative suspect—as the gunman. Coles was also the first person to accuse Davis of the crime.

Troy Davis has been denied a hearing in federal court on the reliability of the witness testimony used against him due to restrictions on federal appeals. However, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue can still commute his sentence. Please write to Governor Perdue and urge him to support clemency for Troy Davis.

Human Rights: Ensure that Detention Centers Meet Humane Standards

Write to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and demand that detention centers for immigrant detainees meet domestic and international standards.

Send letters to:

Secretary Janet Napolitano
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

BACKGROUND

Tens of thousands of people are kept in U.S. immigration detention facilities each year. Often, these people—who include lawful permanent residents, undocumented immigrants, and asylum seekers—are held for months or years without receiving a hearing to determine the legitimacy of their detention. In addition, the conditions detainees are kept in fall short of domestic and international standards. Immigrants are often put in excessive restraints, and medical care falls far short of humane standards. Moreover, oversight and accountability for abuse or neglect is almost non-existent.

Immigrant detainees should be treated humanely. Please write to Secretary Janet Napolitano today and urge her to enforce human rights detention standards in all detention facilities that house immigration detainees.

Contacting Elected Officials

<p style="text-align: center;">Congress</p> <p><i>Mailing Address</i> United States Senate <i>or</i> U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515</p> <p><i>Phone Number</i> Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121</p> <p><i>E-mail</i> Visit www.senate.gov or www.house.gov to use your representatives' e-mail contact forms.</p>	
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www.secular.org.