



# Ethical Action Report



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## **Oppose United Nations Resolutions on the Defamation of Religions**

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and speak out against so-called defamation of religion laws.

### **BACKGROUND**

The United Nations is expected to soon introduce a "Defamation of Religions" resolution that will actually serve to undermine religious liberty worldwide. The resolution, which is introduced annually at the UN, would criminalize words or actions that are deemed as hostile to a particular religion.

Anti-defamation laws are incompatible with the fundamental freedom of expression. Respect for religion is important, but so too is valid criticism of religions and religious practices. The right to disagree and express dissent is a fundamental aspect of the freedom of thought. Moreover, anti-defamation laws protect ideas, not people, and the support of anti-defamation laws at the international level may be used to justify harsh blasphemy laws at the national level, such as in countries like Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, and Afghanistan.

Write a letter to the editor of your local paper and speak out against the Defamation of Religions Resolution. Help build support for the defeat of the resolution when it's introduced.

## **Sex Education: Help Stop Abstinence-Only Funding in the Health Care Reform Bill**

Call or write to your senators and ask them to do all they can to remove funding for the Title V abstinence-only program from the final health care reform bill.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Senate Finance Committee recently approved an amendment to the Health Care Reform bill that would bring back the failed Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program--despite the fact that abstinence-only education is ineffective and raises serious concerns about the separation of church and state. The amendment, offered by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), would reinstate the \$50 million per year in funding for the program that had expired on June 30 of this year.

Not a dime more should go towards abstinence-only education programs. They are a waste of taxpayer dollars--the overwhelming evidence shows that they are ineffective at delaying sexual initiation or reducing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and they're no more likely or less likely than comprehensive sex education programs to increase the use of contraceptives. Moreover, abstinence-only education programs frequently promote a narrow and often religious perception of sex, relationships and marriage.

It's not too late to have this amendment removed from the final health care bill--but we need to speak up now and let Congress know we don't want our money going to abstinence-only education programs.

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## **Support the National Criminal Justice Commission Act (S. 714)**

Call or write to your senators and ask them to support the National Criminal Justice Act (S. 714), which would create a panel to examine and change a range of harmful national criminal justice policies.

### **BACKGROUND**

The United States represents 5% of the world's population, yet we house 25% of the world's prisoners. The number of drug offenders who have been incarcerated have climbed 120% since 1980. And re-entry programs for ex-offenders are often poorly organized and other times simply nonexistent. There's no denying that our criminal justice system is broken—it has created overcrowding in our jails, it hasn't helped make our neighborhoods safer, and it has wasted billions of dollars as a result.

We need to fix the system. But first we need to determine what's wrong with it in order to make sure we don't repeat the same mistakes. Ask your senators in Congress to support the National Criminal Justice Commission Act, which will create a blue-ribbon commission charged with undertaking an 18-month, top to bottom review of our entire criminal justice system.

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## **Save Khristian Oliver: Man Sentenced to Death by Jury that Consulted Bible**

Write to the governor of Texas, Rick Perry, and demand clemency for Khristian Oliver, who received the death penalty after jurors consulted the Bible when determining his sentence.

Write letters to:

Governor Rick Perry  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

### **BACKGROUND**

Khristian Oliver, a 32-year old man, is set to be executed in Texas on November 5 for a murder committed during a burglary. During his trial, in 1999, his jurors consulted copies of the Bible while deciding whether to impose a death sentence—including text supporting the death penalty. Some passages were even read aloud in the court room, including: "The murderer shall surely be put to death," "And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, the murderer shall surely be put to death," and "The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer."

These actions call into serious question the impartiality of the jurors. In fact, a U.S. Federal Appeals Court acknowledged that the use of the Bible amounted to an external influence prohibited under the U.S. Constitution—yet upheld the death penalty for Oliver anyway.

Write to the governor of Texas and urge him to grant clemency for Khristian Oliver.

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## Contacting Elected Officials

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Washington, DC 20500

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### Congress

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United States Senate  
*Or*  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

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