



Ethical Action Report

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Hold Wall Street Accountable

We address this topic again in an on-going attempt to address a major miscarriage of justice: the 2008 financial collapse and the virtual amnesty given to those responsible. An estimated 7 million American families lost their homes, taxpayers were left to bail out the banks, while executives took their plunder and ran. Given President Obama's recent State of the Union call to "hold Wall Street accountable," it is time once again to urge action.

The President announced that the Attorney General would create a special unit of federal prosecutors and state attorneys general to expand investigations into the abusive lending of risky mortgages that led to the housing crisis. He said, "This new unit will hold accountable those who broke the law, speed assistance to homeowners, and help turn the page on an era of recklessness that hurt so many Americans." We hope the President means it, and we urge you to communicate the same to the White House.

The President stated the simple truth: "In 2008, the house of cards collapsed. We learned that mortgages had been sold to people who couldn't afford or understand them. Banks had made huge bets and bonuses with other people's money. Regulators had looked the other way, or didn't have the authority to stop the bad behavior. It was wrong. It was irresponsible. And it plunged our economy into a crisis that put millions out of work, saddled us with more debt, and left innocent, hard-working Americans holding the bag."

Previous efforts to force those responsible to compensate victims of such behavior have proven disappointing. Negotiations between the banks, state and federal officials have been going on for months and were expected to end in an appropriate settlement. Little real progress has been made. Let's support the President in holding the financial sector accountable. Call the White House and the Office of the Attorney General, and sign some of the on-line petitions demanding accountability, such as those at MoveOn (<http://pol.moveon.org/bankfraud/?rc=homepage>) and Color of Change (<http://act.colorofchange.org/sign/BankAccountability/>).

Promote Green Energy Innovation through Incentives

In President Obama's State of the Union speech last month, he offered a broad range of energy policy suggestions including both forward-looking alternative energy projects and renewed efforts to extract fossil fuels from American land.

Unfortunately he did not go far enough in the name of the environment. One specific good idea the President failed to pursue, as reported by the Brookings Institution, is to channel “the revenues from fossil fuel drilling permits and licenses to investment in energy innovation.” Economic incentives are necessary to get the energy industry searching for greener solutions.

This approach has the potential to garner bi-partisan support. Even current Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner introduced the *2009 American Energy Act* that would have paired expanded oil and gas drilling with new investments in renewable and alternative energy.

In the week following the State of the Union address, during the last week of January, the White House sent Department of Energy representatives around the country to promote energy innovation. Secretary Chu, Deputy Secretary Poneman, and Acting Under Secretary Majumdar, for example, went to towns and factories touting energy efficient innovation.

As Department spokespersons return to the nation’s capital, greet them with letters and emails urging less dependence on coal, oil and other dirty sources. Recommend that fees for permits to “drill baby drill” go toward innovative green solutions, like alternative energies and conservation. Demand that government encourage energy efficient homes and buildings. Contact Secretary Chu by phone at 202-586-5000, by email at The.Secretary@hq.doe.gov, or by mail at U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20585. Let him know of your support for economic incentives to environmentally sensitive energy production.

Support the Reason Rally and the Secular Coalition for America Lobby Day

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA), of which the American Ethical Union is a member, urges all to attend the *Reason Rally* (<http://reasonrally.org/>) in the nation’s capital on March 24th as well as its *Lobby Day for Reason* the day before. The Reason Rally is sponsored by many influential secular and humanist organizations, such as the SCA, the American Humanist Association, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism. It offers speakers, music, and comedy and will take place on the National Mall, 10:00AM-4:00PM.

On Friday, March 23, the SCA is organizing *Lobby Day for Reason* for those who register at <http://secular.org/ReasonLobby>. Registrants will be trained for free on the basics of lobbying and on current issues of focus for the SCA. Those who can’t go to Washington can still look over the SCA’s congressional scorecard (<http://secular.org/content/scorecards/Congress/2011/Summary>) released in late January that rates representatives on bills concerning the rights of humanists and non-believers, such as maintaining the separation of church and state. Reach out to your Representative and let him or her know your thoughts on the Report Card grade.

Finally, the Reason Rally offers Ethical Culturists a chance to share our unique blend of reason, compassion, relationship-building, and dedication to deed before creed. While we join our SCA friends in fighting for separation of church and state and the rights of non-theists, this is an opportunity to educate others about our identity as a religious and philosophical movement committed to ethical action.

Define Medical Neglect to Include Faith-Healing-Only Treatments for Children

It has been two years since a coalition of humanists, secularists and non-believers met with White House officials and advocated closing federal loopholes regarding medical neglect of children denied medicine or treatment due to the religious beliefs of their parents. Unfortunately, the lives of children are still being put in jeopardy.

Federal law exempts so-called faith healing from the minimum federal definition of medical neglect under CAPTA, the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act. Thus authorized by federal law, approximately thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia allow for some form of exemption in state statutes. It is time to amend CAPTA so that such exemptions are ended and open the door to the imposition of civil liabilities on “faith-healing” treatment providers. State officials should be empowered to act in the best interests of children so that suffering is minimized and lives saved.

A study by the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect states, “more children are actually being abused in the name of God than in the name of Satan.” Politicians sometimes try to justify these horrific legal exemptions claiming they are only defending constitutional rights. The Supreme Court ruled in 1943, however, that there is no right “to make martyrs of their children.” (Prince v. Massachusetts, U.S. Supreme Court, 1943) The exemptions in federal and state law are merely the result of lobbying in which religious special rights are placed above basic ethics, humanity, and science.

Religious exemptions for faith healing are opposed by the American Medical Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National District Attorney’s Association. Call your representative and demand action to protect children!

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

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To share your views on national legislation with the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) go to:
www.secular.org

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