



Americans United for Separation of Church and State

3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, CA 92704

On the web at www.au-oc.org Email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com

**Americans United—Orange County Presents a Forum
The Separation of Church and State—From the Perspectives of
Judaism, Islam, & Christianity**

Special Date & Time: Sunday July 16, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.

Special Location: Temple Bat Yahm
1011 Camelback Street, Newport Beach

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Americans United for Separation of Church and State of Orange County is very pleased to be presenting a discussion of the meaning of the separation of church and state from three religious perspectives.

From the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles is Rabbi Stephen Julius Stein representing Judaism.



Rabbi Stein was ordained in 2003 from the Hebrew Union College. Along with congregational and teaching responsibilities, he serves as co-chair of the Central Conference of American Rabbis Gay and Lesbian Rabbinic Network as well as being the vice-president of the Wilshire Center Interfaith Council.

Representing Islam is Sheikh Yassir Fazaqa, the Imam at the Orange County Islamic Foundation in Mission Viejo where he conducts a lecture series on Islamic topics in Ara-



bic as well as a youth program on Quran and Life Challenges.

He has a degree in Islamic Studies from the Imam Saud University Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in Virginia and a Masters degree in psychotherapy from California State Long Beach.



Rounding out the panel is the Reverend Jerald Stinson who is the Senior Minister of the First Congregational Church of Long Beach as well as an AU National Advisory Council member. He is a former United Church

of Christ missionary in southern Africa and graduated from the Harvard School of Divinity.

The forum will be moderated by chapter member Rich Gillock and will begin with each panelist presenting their perspective. It will be followed by questions from the moderator to engage our panelists in discussion. After the refreshment break we will have Q & A from the audience.

There is no charge for this event; to RSVP please call 714-299-4551 or email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com.



Message from the President—Steph Campbell

In late May, a state appeals court again ruled that KOCE should **not** have been sold to the KOCE Foundation but should have gone to the Daystar TV network of tele-evangelists who offered more money. It's not clear what will happen next in this long running battle, but Daystar, in their law suit, is alleging that the District and Board trustees violated the constitutional freedom of religion provisions by not selling KOCE to a Christian broadcaster. Of course they're also willing to drop this suit (which seeks \$20 to \$30 million in damages) if the District puts up the station for sale again. In

case you're wondering why Daystar is so eager to buy KOCE it's because they can operate under KOCE's non-commercial license and still solicit donations.

We already have Trinity Broadcasting Network in the County—and we hardly need another station—especially one that only considers born again Christians for employment—at least that's what it says on one of their career opportunity ads on their web site.

I would encourage all of our members to keep up with the outcome of this issue. Although it is likely to run on for

years before it gets resolved, it will have an impact on us all.

And while that's going on, don't forget that It's initiative season and there are a couple to watch out for that are being promoted by the religious right. There's a new "Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy constitutional amendment" which should look familiar as well as several initiatives for a constitutional amendment that would eliminate domestic partnership rights. So be careful what you sign!



It's an Election Year, Duck and Cover! — Rich Gillock

It's an election year, so political pandering can be expected, even required, by an administration and a Congress that has ridden to power on the back of the religious wrong (AKA the "religious right" that never is right). The promotion of ignorance and intolerance is rampant this election year, with everything from Constitutional Amendments to bills in Congress to undermine the basic principles of separation of church and state as well as the separation of powers enshrined in our Constitution.

Fear and hate are coupled emotions that the religious wrong lives and dies by. Whether it is the bi-annual Constitutional Amendment against flag desecration, or a plea to save the sanctity of marriage by preventing gay couples from sharing in the same rights that every one else enjoys, the policies of hate and division are paramount in the political process.

What these Constitutional Amendments would promote are Conformity and Obedience. These are not the qualities of Liberty nor of Justice.

But there are even more insidious attacks on American's freedoms coming

from Congress. Let's start with the "Constitution Restoration Act" (HR 1070). Wow, sounds like a repeal of the USA PATRIOT Act, unfortunately it isn't. The idea of this bill is to prohibit our federal courts from hearing church-state challenges. So if you're denied your rights to freely exercise your religion, you can't take it to a federal court.

Now I bet you thought, like me, that it was the courts that protected us from the excesses of the legislative and executive branches. If the federal courts are barred from hearing cases involving the First Amendment to our Constitution, then where are those cases supposed to be heard? What would happen to challenges of everything from your tax dollars going to fund someone else's church under the Faith Based Initiative to placing the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Court House? They would be in limbo, just like the religious wrong wants.

But it gets worse. HR 2679 is "The Public Expression of Religion Act." As usual, the title is completely misleading. It should be "The Protection of People Who Violate Your Religious

Rights Act." Because this would prevent you from recovering legal costs of litigation over establishment cases, the ones where government shows favoritism to one religion over another. Judgments would be limited to "injunctive relief," like "they were wrong, they must quit doing that, thank you for bringing this to our attention, and eat your enormous court costs."

The religious wrong knows that they can raise money just by saying "God wants you to give money to fight this case." But Americans United appeals to a more rationale base. If this legislation passes, then it will be difficult to fight and win cases like this year's Dover, PA case on "intelligent design."

Please write to your Congressman, and to your newspaper, and condemn these bills. Both have been dormant for a year waiting to spring forth in this election year. It is the worst kind of electoral pandering to threaten our Constitutional rights in the name of a partisan god. For more information, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and search on the bill numbers.

May Program Explores Critical Thinking and Church State Separation—Alison Young

At our May 20th meeting, philosophy professor Dr. Martin Young presented a fascinating examination of logical contradictions in those who promote both church state separation and religion in schools. Using the device of a fictional character, "Sid the Self-Deceiver", Dr. Young demonstrated the cognitive and neurological quirks that allow people to self-deceive, and thus ignore the logic of critical thinking.

Dr. Young discussed 3 aspects of self-deception originally defined by Dr. Anthony Greenwald in 1980: "Beneffectance is the tendency to see oneself as both beneficial and effective....Sid...will exert himself to interpret incoming information in such a way as to take credit for desired outcomes and avoid blame for undesired ones. Sid will remember his successes better than his failures....Sid will do what he can to avoid any responsibility for any harm to others that resulted from his actions.

Egocentricity is the tendency to see everything that happens as specifically directed at or caused by oneself....Sid will have a strong tendency to find ways of interpreting events so as to make it look like whatever was done by others, was done in reaction to something Sid did, or was done specifically in order to have some effect on Sid.

Cognitive conservatism is the ability of the mind to preserve existing ideas against contradictory new information. Our Sid thus carefully misinterprets, ignores or forgets new information to make sure that it never, ever proves him to have been wrong about anything. Sid can even rewrite his own memories of the past to justify his present beliefs. Since Sid can fool himself about *anything*, there is no limit to how absurdly past and present information can be misinterpreted to make Sid turn out to have been right all along."

Brain research done by Dr. Drew Westin further explained self-deceptive behaviour. "Confronted with a threat to his preferred view of himself and his world, Sid's brain activates a bunch of emotion-processing circuits, notably circuits involved in resolving conflicts. Curiously enough, the circuits involved in conscious thought don't turn on, and, by amazing coincidence, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which...handles reasoning, also remains dormant during this process."

Dr. Young further discussed ways in which rational thinkers can deal with the "Sids" of the world, and stressed the importance of introducing critical thinking into the educational process as early as possible. His insights into the human mind gave participants tools with which to allow them to fine-tune their approach to persuading those who might be persuadable into understanding and supporting the necessity for church-state separation.



Tabling Events—Past and Future

We participated in two tabling event in May. The first was at Soka University's International Day and the second was at Estancia High School.

At Soka University we were near one of the stages so we had lots of traffic at our table as people moved from one event to another. There were lots of activities, performances, sales of handicrafts from around the world as well as a prolific amount of food which we contributed to by selling our Darwin Squares brownies.

The Estancia High School Social Forum was again put together by the Human Rights Club and almost entirely organ-

ized by the students. Teachers helped out by encouraging students to participate and in some cases gave extra credit for meeting with the vari-



ous representatives of groups active in the community. This is the second year that Americans United has participated in this event and it is always

impressive to see the intellectual depth and curiosity of these high school students. They are always up to a challenge and for those who participate in the event, they need to be up to a challenge as well!

And coming up on September 23rd is the 5th annual Walk For Hope. We will have a table at this event as well. Like last year it will be at the El Dorado East Regional Park in Long Beach and will run from 9:00 to 1:00. For information on last year's event, please see their web site at www.bethecause.org and see their pictures of the event.

Americans United

Orange County



Help us promote the separation of church and state in Orange County

We're on the web at www.au-oc.org

Basic membership is \$25 and includes an annual subscription to Church & State magazine. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and donations beyond the \$18.00 value of the subscription to Church & State magazine are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Email any questions to orangecountyau@yahoo.com; to join or renew, complete this form and mail to the chapter at: **3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, California 92704**

New Membership Renewal Membership Special Donation

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Email: _____

Keep Up To Date with Americans United-Orange County

Along with our newsletter, we keep people informed with what's going on in the fight to preserve separation of church and state as well as our events through the web site at www.au-oc.org and also through our Yahoo! Group. If you're not on the Yahoo! Group, send an email to au-oc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. We normally meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 p.m. (Our July meeting will be at a different venue and time, see page 1.)

Irvine Ranch Water District neither supports nor endorses the cause nor activities of organizations which use the District's meeting rooms that are made available as a public service.

Americans United-OC Chapter

3337 S. Bristol, #251
Santa Ana, CA 92704

Calendar of Events



Steering Committee
2nd Thursdays, 7:00
Call 714-299-4551 for
information and location

July

16 — Interfaith discussion on the separation of church and state from the perspectives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (Temple Bet Yahm, Newport Beach, 3 pm)

August

19 — Issues Group—topic TBD, (Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine, 2:00 pm)

September

16 — Rev. Karen Stoyanoff, (Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine, 2:00 pm)