

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

Program Announcement

Dr. Gavin Huntley-Fenner—Irvine Unified School Board

March 17th 2:00 p.m. at the Irvine Ranch Water District

Exploring the Role Religion Plays in Schools



We are proud to present Dr. Gavin Huntley-Fenner, a current trustee of the Irvine Unified School Board as our speaker at our March 17th meeting. The meeting will begin at 2:00 p.m. and it will be held at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine.

Dr. Fenner will be explor-

ing what role religion has to play in a secular education system in a nation where many people are religious. He sees the need for schools to both teach and reinforce ethical behavior and to prepare students to interact in society with mutual understanding and respect. Given the need for the separation of church and state and the understanding that for most Americans ethics and faith are closely intertwined, Dr. Huntley-Fenner will discuss how these roles can be fulfilled and will focus on the role science education plays.

Dr. Huntley-Fenner received a PhD in Brain

and Cognitive Science from MIT, and specialized in research and professional experience in child development. In addition, as a former professor at UC Irvine, he has published original research on language development and children's learning of mathematics, and has over fifteen years of experience conducting research in areas related to child development, human learning, memory, and information processing. He currently is a managing scientist at Exponent, Inc.

There is no charge for meeting attendance and refreshments will be served.

March/April 2007

Volume 3, Issue 2

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Save The Date!

The annual Great American Write-In is March 24th. This is an opportunity to meet with progressive groups in Orange County, write letters to elected officials, and understand what the issues are that are impacting your neighbors. Come and write letters or volunteer to staff the AU table. Either way we hope to see you there. The Write-In begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Senior Center, 20 Lake Street in Irvine.



Farewell to Molly Ivins: Molly Ivins, who died in January, was an untiring supporter of the separation of church and state. She commented that "I have recently noticed a number of misexplanations of separation of church and state being spread by fundamentalists. 'It's not in the Constitution,' they cry. Actually, it is, even though the words 'separation of church and state' do not appear therein." We at AU-OC say a sad goodbye to Molly.

Message from the President—Steph Campbell

Hein v. The Freedom From Religion Foundation has gone to the Supreme Court with a case that has broad reaching implications beyond our ability to challenge the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Americans United has also filed a friend-of-the-court brief.

The issue is one that AU-OC has spoken out on many times. It focuses on the regional conferences set up by the White House to help religious groups compete with secular organizations for federal grants to provide social services. Part of the case rests on the fact that these conferences are not offered to non-religious community organizations. The immediate question before the court is whether or not those conferences violate the constitutional

separation of church and state. It is expected to go deeper and address the question whether an individual may go to court to challenge the co-mingling of church and state.

Normally an individual cannot sue over how the government spends money. But in *Flast v. Cohen* (1968) an exception was made for lawsuits based on the separation of church and state. But the Bush administration is interpreting *Flast v. Cohen* to apply **only** to congressional spending and not to executive orders.

The original lawsuit was dismissed but the 7th Circuit reversed it in January of 2006. "The line proposed by the government would be artificial because there is so much that executive officials could do to

promote religion in ways forbidden by the establishment clause," that court said. In the Administration's appeal they are arguing that since 1968 there have been other precedent setting cases where the right to sue has been tied to the legislative branch's ability to tax and spend.

And now it's before the Supreme Court. Not only will the outcome of this case be significant to the executive orders which created the faith based initiative it will also provide us a clear view into this court's position on church/state separation.

This is definitely one that all of us will be following closely.

—Steph Campbell

Letters To The Editor—If you'd like to write a guest editorial, share your views or respond to a newsletter article, please send your submission to the address or email on Page 4.

Mikey Weinstein in L.A.

Mikey Weinstein is the founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and a former Reagan administration attorney. He is the author of [With God on Our Side: One Man's War Against an Evangelical Coup in America's Military](#). He has worked with AU in trying to get religious intolerance out of the Air Force Academy.

During his appearances in L.A. he will be talking about the growing threat of Christian right organizing in the military.

He will be in the area between March 15th and 18th. For dates and locations, please see <http://www.jewsonfirst.org/>.

Michael Newdow in Orange County - May 19th !



You may not know the name Michael Newdow or even recognize the picture, but you probably have heard about the guy that challenged "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. AU-OC will be bringing Dr. Newdow to Orange County on May 19th. He will be speaking at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway at 2:00 pm. This will be a great opportunity to learn about why Dr. Newdow is carrying on this fight, what it's like to go to the Supreme Court, and why he doesn't give up. Here's a quick timeline of God and the Pledge:

- 1954: "Under God" is inserted into the Pledge
- 2000: "Under God" is challenged by Dr. Newdow on behalf of his daughter
- 2004: Supreme Court rules 5-3 that Newdow does not have standing to litigate due to "prudential" concerns
- 2005: A **new** Pledge lawsuit is filed
- 2007: Expected date for oral arguments

I do hope you'll join us.

Orange County AU's New Activist Group

In February our Activist Group met for the first time. Guidelines with a "how to" manual were provided to help the attendees learn how to work with city councils and school boards. We were all happy to see new faces among our regular attendees.

One area that was discussed was the issue of pre-meeting prayer. Some of our members are now looking at monitoring the use of prayers by different city councils.

Currently there are only 9 cities

that do not have pre-meeting prayers: Aliso Viejo, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Rancho Santa Margarita, Seal Beach, Stanton, and Villa Park. Costa Mesa has a "Moment of Solemn Expression" and Irvine has a "Moment of Silence." Having recently attended a Costa Mesa City Council meeting I would have to say that it sounded like a prayer to me.

If you weren't able to attend our recent training, but would like

more information, please email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com.

This is a hot topic! Recently Villa Park has just raised the question of whether or not an invocation should be performed and it's causing quite a debate in the City.

Councilman Jim Rheins said religious matters are personal and should be kept out of city meetings. "If someone needs divine guidance or wants it, they should do it privately prior to the City Council meeting," he said.

AU-OC January 2007 Meeting Jim Armendaris of the Orange County Human Relations Commission



Our Kick-Off meeting for January 2007 was filled with interesting, if scary, information. We were all very pleased to have Jim Armendaris provide us with insight

into hate crimes, what they are, what to do and the state of hate crimes in Orange County.

A number of the hate crimes committed in Orange County come from members of white supremacist gangs who also are deeply involved in narcotics.

Does everyone oppose these purveyors of hate? While few groups would endorse hate crimes, Orange County's own home grown religious right group the "Traditional Values Coalition" (TVC) has its own views. When the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recently produced a report on the rise of extremist groups in Orange County, TVC dismissed it as propaganda and claimed that there's little substance to their claims. Not very likely!

There is an excellent article on this in the February 15th edition of the OC Weekly (<http://www.ocweekly.com/news/news/hate-inc/26708/?page=1>).

A "Must See" Film for AU-OC Members

Red State—The Movie Join Us on March 20th

On March 20th at 7:00 p.m. AU-OC will hold a joint meeting with the Orange County chapter of the ACLU. The meeting will be at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine. We will be showing "Red State—The Movie" which is an investigation into what makes a "red state" person "red".

And what do others say? "Eye opening and scary for those who think America could never become a theocracy" says Sam Seder of Air America.

And if that's not enough for you, James Dobson of Focus On The Family says that it's "to be avoided at all costs; most certainly will lead to eternal damnation."

Based on these two reviews alone, it's got to be worth seeing.



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

Americans United-OC Chapter
3337 S. Bristol, #251
Santa Ana, CA 92704



March

24 – Great American Write In 9:30 to 1:00. Come help staff our table or just come to join the fun and write some letters. Lakeview Senior Center on Lake between Barranca & Alton in Irvine.

April

21 – AU Activist Group. (Irvine Ranch Water District, Multi-Purpose Room at 2 pm)

[May 19th—Save the Date for Michael Newdow](#)

March

20– Joint AU/ACLU Meeting showing the film “Red State” (Irvine Ranch Water District, 7 pm)

Every Month

AU-OC Steering Committee
1st Thursdays, 7:00
Call 714-299-4551 for information and location

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 us at: au-oc-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com. We meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 pm.

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.

Join or Renew Today!

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

\$25 **\$50** **\$75** **Other** _____ **Amount Enclosed:** _____

Name _____

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