

FEBRUARY 2021



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NEWSLETTER OF THE LAKE SUPERIOR FREETHINKERS

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Erotophobia: *My Threat of Pleasure*

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**FREE
THINKERS**

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Rod Froseth is a holistic sexuality educator. He writes articles on sexuality, develops curriculum and educational tools, trains sex educators and therapists, and guides groups and individuals in their sexual development. Rod's journey to his current post in sexuality education, surprisingly launched out of religion, as Rod worked as an ordained minister for twenty-five years serving seven of them in Russia leading a team in community development. Rod lives with his wife and youngest son in Duluth.

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Erotophobia: *My Threat of Pleasure*



Join us Sunday February 7th at 10am via Zoom to hear speaker Rod Froseth

A persistent and annoying social phenomenon of Erotophobia hampers many people, denying them light-hearted sexual playfulness as well as bone-deep erotic pleasure.

Erotophobia is an irrational fear of various aspects of sex that manifests as discomfort, disgust, or just unsettledness. It impacts society and our quality of life more than we know.

Surprisingly, we likely experience erotophobia every single day.

We'll explore the most common social manifestations of erotophobia, some suggestions of its source and why it persists, and a couple of tips on how we might overcome it and enjoy the sexual facets of our lives more fully.

Join us for virtual Happy Hour

from 4:00-6:00 pm Thursday, February 4th via Zoom



Join us for LSF's February Social Dinner

February 17th 5:30pm
via Zoom



On January 14th LSF Treasurer Charles Gessert and several other members of LSF met with the staff of the Second Harvest Food Bank to give them a check for over \$2,000.



This amount included a \$1,000 grant from FFRF and over \$1,000 of matching donations from members of Lake Superior Freethinkers.

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**Betrayed and battered
but not beaten**

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Religious freedom at life's end:

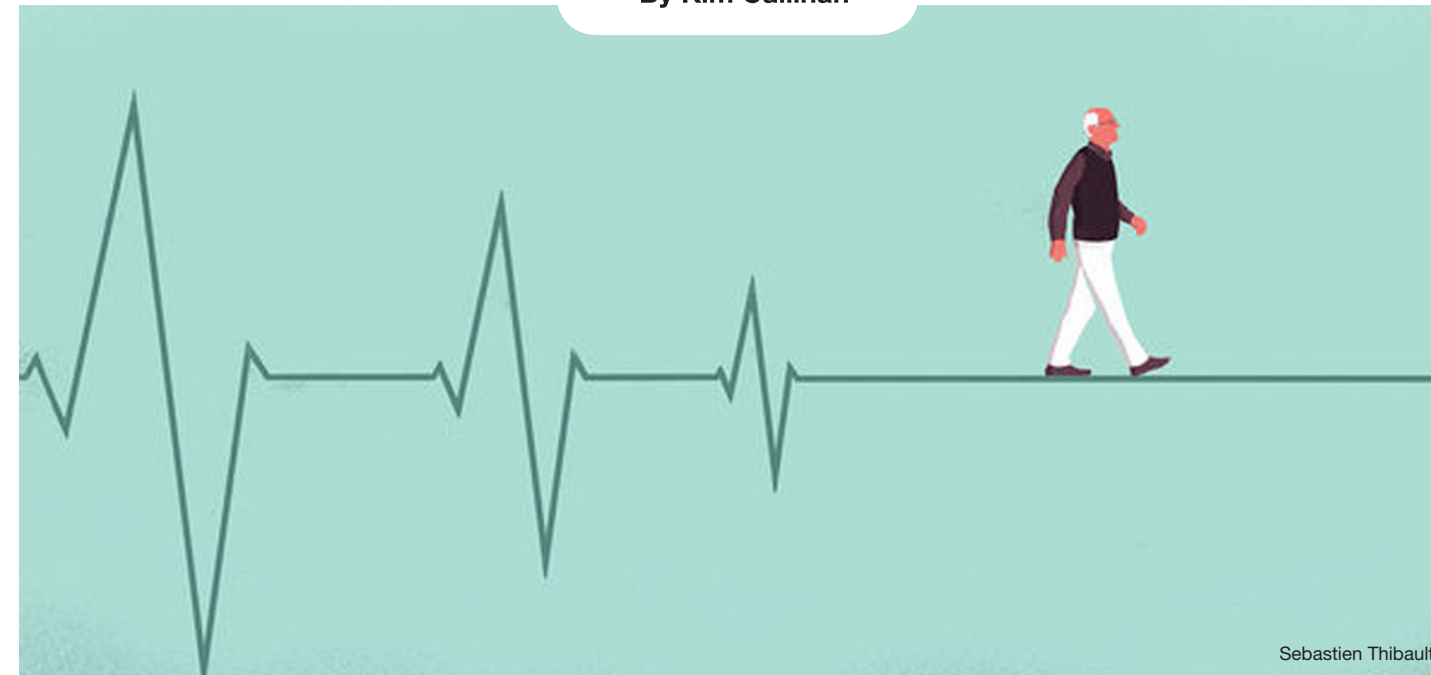
An aspiration that's worth the fight

By Kim Callinan

January 16th marked Religious Freedom Day. While people's spiritual beliefs take on heightened meaning at the end of their life, religious freedom at this time is unfortunately an aspiration, not a reality. A Jan. 4 study in the Journal of American Medical Association, found that an overwhelming 71% of Americans believe that personal decisions about their health should take priority over a healthcare facility's religious values. Unfortunately, at life's end, religious institutions often dictate care decisions, regardless of the patient's preferences.

This harsh reality is particularly true in Catholic health systems, which comprise nearly 80 percent of religious health systems, and whose Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) are among the most restrictive and vigorously enforced when it comes to end of life care. While many Catholic health systems provide excellent, compassionate care overall, at the end of life they force too many patients to endure care inconsistent with, and many times directly contradictory to, their own values.

In fact, the Catholic ERDs, which are enforced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, state that if a dying patient's pain is uncontrollable, a doctor should help their patients "appreciate the Christian understanding of redemptive suffering." The ERDs also require that medically-assisted nutrition and hydration be provided to patients who can reasonably be expected to



Sebastien Thibault

live indefinitely if given such care. This includes patients suffering from chronic and irreversible conditions, such as a "persistent vegetative state," when a person is completely unresponsive and being kept alive by medical intervention only. In contrast, seven out of 10 Americans believe that end-of-life care should instead prioritize "helping people die without pain, discomfort or stress," according to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey.

While religious entities are allowed to impose their values on patients, they also receive millions of taxpayer dollars. Catholic hospitals and health

systems receive nearly \$48 billion dollars annually in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, according to a recent report by Community Catalyst. Unfortunately, given the reach and growth of Catholic health care, people often do not have other care options available. According to the Catholic Health Association, U.S. Catholic health care is the nation's largest group of non-for-profit health care providers, providing patient care for more than 21 million emergency room visits annually. Furthermore, these numbers are climbing: the Community Catalyst report found that Catholic-affiliated hospitals grew by more

than 28% over the last two decades. In 52 areas, a Catholic-affiliated hospital is the only care available within a 200+ mile radius.

Even in areas where other care options exist, transparency is lacking: a New York Times analysis of Catholic hospital websites found the majority of Catholic hospitals don't disclose how their ethical directives impact the care a patient will or won't be able to receive. In fact, in the majority of cases, it was difficult to even tell that the hospital was Catholic. Also concerning is that many Catholic health systems policies prohibit their doctors from providing information or a referral for end-of-life care options that are inconsistent with their values. This gag rule on doctors leaves patient's powerless at their time of greatest need.

According to the same Journal of the American Medical Association study I cited earlier, only 6 percent of people consider religious affiliation when deciding their health care provider. If you are among the 71% of Americans who don't believe that a health system's policies should dictate the care you receive, I encourage you to ask your local hospitals whether they have religious directives that govern care; if they do, make alternative arrangements if possible.

Kim Callinan is president and CEO of Compassion & Choices, the nation's oldest, largest, and most active nonprofit working to improve and expand healthcare options for the end of life.

Christian Nationalist sentiments of eight senators voting not to certify

Although many senators with extremist views ended up voting for Biden's certification, the eight who voted "Nay" fall squarely in the ranks of Christian Nationalists:

Article courtesy of Freedom From Religion Foundation



TED CRUZ (Texas) has served in the Senate since 2013 and attends Houston's First Baptist Church. His father was a Catholic Cuban refugee who became a born-again Christian and a traveling preacher and pastors a Dallas church and directs Purifying Fire Ministries. Cruz attended two private evangelical high schools, and kicked off his Senate campaign at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University.

As solicitor general of Texas, Cruz fought for the "constitutionality of the Ten Commandments monument at the Texas Capitol and the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance." He told Liberty University students "our rights don't come from man. They come from God Almighty." "God" and "religious liberty" were primary stump speech themes for Cruz, according to Religion News Service.

Cruz announced a "national prayer team" for his presidential campaign. He has been pictured making a show of kneeling in prayer outside the White House. Cruz has called to amend the Constitution to prohibit same-sex marriages. He has called for a ban of medical abortion.

After FFRF complained about public school cheerleaders routinely opening games by holding banners with bible verses for football players to run through, Cruz sided with the cheerleaders. FFRF condemned Cruz's statement on school shootings supposedly being caused by a lack of school prayer. FFRF letters to him include one condemning his climate change denial.



JOSH HAWLEY (Missouri), who was elected in 2018, was raised Methodist, but now identifies as evangelical. He formerly clerked for Chief Justice John Roberts and worked for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. He is one of the most overtly Christian Nationalist members of Congress, with his stated goal to "transform our society to reflect the gospel truth and lordship of Jesus Christ." Journalist Katherine Stewart has

thoroughly documented Hawley's Christian Nationalist views in a recent New York Times op-ed.

At a "Pastors and Pews" event in Kansas City when he was Missouri attorney general (which he referred to as a "form of ministry"), Hawley stated:

There is only one god. That god is Jesus Christ, who is seated on the throne and is lord over all and [...] as believers we are charged to take that message — that the lord reigns, that Jesus Christ reigns, that he is risen and is seated on the throne — . . . our charge [is to] take the lordship of Christ, that message, into the public realm and to seek the obedience of the nations — of our nation... to influence our society, and even more than that, to transform our society to reflect the gospel truth and lordship of Jesus Christ.

FFRF wrote him a letter over this egregious violation. Hawley, as Missouri attorney general, joined an amicus brief against FFRF's challenge of the IRS' preferential housing allowance for ministers, as well as FFRF's litigation against a cross in a Pensacola, Fla., public park.

Hawley notably participated in a "worship protest" on the Mall last October with "prayer, singing and baptisms, but virtually no

social distancing or mask-wearing," where he prayed over the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett for the Supreme Court. As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, he said he would not support any SCOTUS nominee unless they had stated on the record prior to their nomination that Roe v. Wade was "wrongly decided."



CINDY HYDE-SMITH (Mississippi), elected in 2018, is a member of the Macedonia Baptist Church, and reportedly "attended and graduated from a segregation academy that was set up so that white parents could avoid having to send their children to schools with Black students." She was once photographed in a Confederate army cap and is anti-gay. "Cindy believes all children, including

the unborn, are guaranteed the right to life by our Creator," her campaign website proclaims. "As senator, Cindy will fight for and vote to confirm pro-life judges who will interpret the law as written, and not legislate from the bench."

She filed an amicus brief in October supporting a so-called "religious freedom lawsuit" filed by a church against D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser over social distancing guidelines. She signed an amicus brief in support of the Little Sisters of the Poor lawsuit challenging the right of workers to access birth control under the Obamacare contraceptive mandate. She regularly tweets bible quotes. FFRF contacted her a few months ago regarding complaints by constituents over her use of her official governmental Facebook page to promote her religious views.

Christian Nationalist sentiments of eight senators voting not to certify

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CYNTHIA LUMMIS (Wyoming), a newly elected senator, is a member of the archconservative Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod: “I’m a Christian, and I have seen a tremendous rise in anti-Christian activities in the United States and elsewhere.” Her Facebook post on Dec. 8, 2020, began: “Calling All Prayer Warriors!”

She has been endorsed by Concerned Women for America, among other extremist evangelical groups, her campaign website promised to “fight for religious freedom and the rights of the unborn.” As a U.S. representative, she played a key role in attacking Planned Parenthood in 2015 over phony charges that the group profits from selling fetal tissue for research. She has co-sponsored a variety of anti-LGBTQ bills.

A Wyoming editorialist has called Lummis a “white-privilege, systemic-racism denier.”



JOHN KENNEDY (Louisiana), elected in 2016, is described by his campaign website as a founding member of his local Methodist Church. His stated priorities include “defending the unborn” because life “is a gift from God,” and advocating “conscience protections for health care providers, insurers, and business owners.” Among the legislation he has sponsored is a bill to allow a state to exclude from its Medicaid program

a provider who performs abortions.

“I am a Christian and believe that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. That belief informs every decision I make and my commitment to serve the public. . . . It was only by God’s divine providence that our founders established the Constitution and the checks and balances that now define our great nation,” Kennedy has said. The American Family Association reported he supports

a Judeo-Christian framework of morality and considers religious liberty at risk in the United States.

Following President Trump’s comments that Haiti and Africa were “shithole nations,” Kennedy defended him, saying Trump is “not a racist.” FFRF sent a complaint letter to Kennedy over a religiously exclusionary Thanksgiving tweet in 2019, in which Kennedy quoted from the bible and wrote: “The people of Louisiana are hard-working, fun-loving, and God-fearing.”



ROGER MARSHALL (Kansas), who was elected to the Senate in 2020 after serving in the House since 2016, identifies as a “nondenominational Christian.” “Faith and community continue to be pillars in Dr. Marshall’s life. He taught Sunday school for over 25 years and has served as an elder, deacon and board chairman of his church,” says his Senate website.

He was endorsed by Family Research Council President Tony Perkins for standing “strong for faith, family, and freedom.” He grew up in a strict Christian household with a police chief father who believed in corporal punishment. The OB-GYN earned an A-rating from the anti-abortion Susan B. Anthony List. He was a major backer of Kyle Duncan, who was confirmed to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, despite his anti-LGBTQ rights record.

Marshall has apparently “tried to read the bible every day since I was 10 years of age, so a lot of the wisdom I’ve been given comes from reading the bible,” he told the Kansas City Star. “Ultimately, that’s the issue . . . every decision I make: Is it consistent with my faith both in word and action.”

RICK SCOTT (Florida), elected in 2018, previously the governor of Florida, identifies his religion as “Christian.” Despite getting Covid-19, he supported a resolution saying “there is no pandemic exception to the First Amendment,” condemning governors and



mayors for using emergency powers “as a sword to go after churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship.”

As governor, he signed a bill to defund Planned Parenthood, spending thousands of tax dollars on a bogus investigation of the organization, and signed into law harassing anti-abortion bills. He also signed into law a so-called religious expression bill requiring public schools to allow students to lead

prayers during school-sanctioned events.

FFRF had urged Scott as governor to cancel the Florida Faith Symposium and objected to his involvement in another faith-based conference.



TOMMY TUBERVILLE (Alabama) assumed his Senate seat in January. He cites the Church of Christ as his denomination. As head coach at several college football teams including Auburn University and the University of Cincinnati, Tuberville was a prominent villain in FFRF’s Pray to Play report, which exposed how public university football teams use chaplains to impose Christianity on student

athletes in violation of the First Amendment. He was also embroiled in controversies and spoke against nonwhite immigrants, warning that “Shariah law has taken over.”

“A Christian conservative, I will always stand up for those who can’t do so on their own. I will fight to protect the sanctity of every human life because future generations may very well look back at the current wave of infanticide sweeping across our nation as this generation’s holocaust,” says his campaign website.

“I do believe today that God sent Donald Trump to us,” Tuberville told Alabama Farmers Federation in a campaign speech. “We’ve definitely got to get God back in our schools.”