

Christian Action Ministry Newsletter

Involving the Christian in Community Action

January-February, 2004 ☆ Vol. 14, Number 1

Inside

New Federal Guidelines Provide Enforcement Lever to Protect Religious Expression in Local Public Schools

Part 2

By
Steve Atherton, Esq.

Editor's Note: this is the second part of this article. The first part appeared in our November – December issue and is available on our website.

But What Can I Do About Physician-Assisted Suicide?

A two part article describing how to educate yourself and take action in the debate over physician assisted suicide.

Page 3



assignment involves writing a poem, the work of a student who submits a poem in the form of a prayer (for example, a psalm) should be judged on the basis of academic standards (such as literary quality) and neither penalized nor rewarded on account of its religious content.”

Student Assemblies and Extracurricular Events

“Student speakers at student assemblies and extracurricular activities such as sporting events may not be selected on a basis that either favors or disfavors religious speech. Where student speakers are selected on the basis of genuinely neutral, evenhanded criteria and retain primary control over the content of their expression, that expression is not attributable to the school and therefore may not be restricted because of its religious (or anti-religious) content. By contrast, where school officials determine or substantially con-

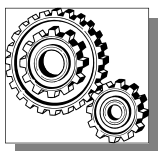
trol the content of what is expressed, such speech is attributable to the school and may not include prayer or other specifically religious (or anti-religious) content. To avoid any mistaken perception that a school endorses student speech that is not in fact attributable to the school, school officials may make appropriate, neutral



disclaimers to clarify that such speech (whether religious or nonreligious) is the speaker's and not the school's.”

Religious Expression and Prayer in Class Assignments

“Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school. Thus, if a teacher's



In the Works

Bills in the legislature Voter guides

Are you interested in becoming involved? CAM is looking for interested and active people to act as liaisons to their church, helping to keep the Christian community informed. Contact CAM at 372-6442.



**“There is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment Clause forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses protect.” - U.S. Supreme Court 1993
(Jones vs. Clear Creek Independent School District)**

(Continued from page 1)

Prayer at Graduation

“School officials may not mandate or organize prayer at graduation or select speakers for such events in a manner that favors religious speech such as prayer. Where students or other private graduation speakers are selected on the basis of genuinely neutral, evenhanded criteria and retain primary control over the content of their expression, however, that expression is not attributable to the school and therefore may not be restricted because of its religious (or anti-religious) content. To avoid any mistaken perception that a school endorses student or

other private speech that is not in fact attributable to the school, school officials may make appropriate, neutral disclaimers to clarify that such speech (whether religious or nonreligious) is the speaker's and not the school's.”

Baccalaureate Ceremonies

“School officials may not mandate or organize religious ceremonies. However, if a school makes its facilities and related services available to other private groups, it must make its facilities and services available on the same terms to organizers of privately sponsored religious baccalaureate ceremonies. In addition, a school may disclaim official endorsement of events sponsored by private groups, provided it does so in a manner that neither favors nor disfavors groups that meet to engage in prayer or religious speech.”

Conclusion

For years, many Christians have been afraid

to “express” their faith in the public schools. These guidelines provide an excellent summary of the law as well as a weapon to use against those who exercise their authority in a manner that is hostile to religious expression. Therefore, I make the following recommendations:

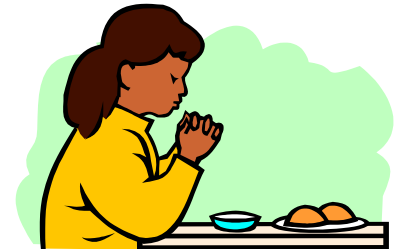
Educate yourself. Review the guidelines for yourself. They are only seven pages long and can be downloaded from my web site { www.shalaw.com } or from the DOE's web site { www.ed.gov }.

Contact your local school district. Call your local school district and ask for a copy of its certification.

Express yourself. If you are a student, a parent with children in the public schools, a teacher, or an employee in the school system then express your faith without fear, but in wisdom. Remember the admonition to be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16.

Apply the Rod of Correction When Appropriate. Should you find that your district is not in compliance, then apply the rod of correction. Each situation is unique and therefore the appropriate response will vary, but I generally recommend confronting the offending party directly and that a written and/or recorded record of that confrontation be kept by you. That gives you something to build upon should you need to go up the enforcement chain to the State and/or U.S. Department of Education as provided for in the law.

Steven H. Atherton is a Christian minister and attorney. He can be reached at P.O. Box 90, Northfield Falls, VT 05664 or by phone at (802) 485-5595.



“Article III—Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged.”

Excerpted from the Northwest Ordinance later passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by President George Washington, 1789

“To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”

President Theodore Roosevelt

But What Can I Do About Physician-Assisted Suicide?

Part 1

By
Mark Flemming

Editor's Note: This is a two part article on what you can do about Physician Assisted Suicide. This part focuses on what you need to do to be prepared. The second part will focus on what action you can take.



PRAY:

- 1.) For wisdom, understanding, courage, and perseverance for yourself and other Christian believers in Vermont - that God would help us to be willing to take time to learn about PAS, to speak out, consider, confront, and convince others that PAS is wrong and that better end-of-life care options are available and should be pursued.
- 2.) That God would touch the hearts, minds, and consciences of doctors all over the state that PAS goes against their duty and privilege to heal, not hurt.
- 3.) That the hearts and minds of the public around this state would see the dangers and non-necessity of legalized PAS.
- 4.) Thank God that the Vermont Medical Society voted on their resolution to oppose legis-

lation concerning any law that would govern PAS by a 3-to-1 margin.

5.) That state legislators would oppose PAS and support end-of-life (palliative) care improvements if and when the issue comes to a vote or the exiting of a bill from a committee.

6.) For community leaders and organizations who oppose PAS, such as Vermont Alliance for Ethical Healthcare's President, Dr. Robert Orr, for wisdom, strength, guidance, and perseverance to help direct this state toward truly protecting and caring for people throughout their entire lives.

7.) Pray for the hearts and minds of Vermont judges, legislators, other government officials, doctors, and the general public to be changed or strengthened to actively protect the lives of all Vermonters, especially those in very difficult situations who are apparently at the end of their lives.



EDUCATE YOURSELF:

1.) Visit the Christian Action Ministry Network Web site for two previous articles by VAEH, President, Dr. Robert Orr, on the basics and dangers of physician-assisted suicide. (Mar-Apr & May-Jun)

www.christianactionministry.com/archives.htm

2.) Visit the VAEH Web site (they oppose PAS) to learn about specific pieces of legislation that are in the Vermont House of Representatives and Senate and other information.

www.vaeh.org/resources/index.shtml

3.) Read the "Oregon's Experience with Physician-Assisted Suicide - Safeguards Don't Work" article (via the Oregon Right-to-Life Web pages) at:

www.ortl.org/pas_in_oregon/pas_experience_1.html

4.) Visit the Christian Medical and Dental Association's Web site.

www.cmds.org

5.) Do you know someone who has a disability? Talk with them. How do they feel about PAS? Is this something they want their doctor to support? Do they think that this is a step

toward euthanasia which could eventually threaten them? Ask them to mobilize other disabled people they may know.

6.) Read the article at the New Mobility Web site about PAS or as they call it Physician-Assisted Death (PAD):

www.newmobility.com/review_article.cfm?id=691&action=browse

7.) Read about the poll reported in September 2003 of those with disabilities concerning PAS:

www.newmobility.com/review_article.cfm?id=752&action=browse

8.) If you want some more in-depth information try the Physicians for Compassionate Care Education Foundation news Web site at:

www.pccf.org/news.htm

Mark Flemming is a Board Member of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Essex Alliance Church

The second part of this article, appearing in our next newsletter, will address Educating Others and Supporting Those on the Front Lines.



Religion is considered as the guardian of [morals], and [morals] are regarded as the guarantee of the laws and pledge for the maintenance of freedom itself." Alexis de Tocqueville

What can I do?



*Faith without works is dead
James 2:17*

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www.christianactionministry.com

As we enter into 2004, an election year filled with political issues, CAM urges you to become involved in the process. Register to vote, support good candidates with your time and money, and inform yourself about the candidates' stands on issues of importance. We close this issue with the words of Charles Finney, one of the greatest American preachers in the early 19th century, who understood the importance of Christian involvement in politics and government.

“The church must take right ground in regards to politics...The time has come for Christians to vote for honest men, and take consistent ground in politics or the Lord will curse them...”

God cannot sustain the free and blessed country, which we love and pray for, unless the Church will take right ground. Politics are a part of religion in such a country as this, and Christians must do their duty to their country as a part of their duty to God...

God will bless or curse this nation according to the course Christians take in politics.”

Charles G. Finney (1792-1875)

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Next Meetings

*January 5, 7:00 pm
Maranatha Christian Church
Williston, Vt.
February 2, 7:00 pm
St. Marks Catholic Church
Burlington, Vt.*

**Making A Difference
in
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