

Activist



January 16

Madison, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation posted on its website the following question about the nomination of Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court: “Are you aware that if nominee Samuel Alito is named to the U.S. Supreme Court, there will be five members—a majority—who are radical, right-wing Roman Catholic?”

February 13

Indianapolis, IN – The Fairness Foundation waged a TV and radio ad campaign in Chicago and Washington, D.C. against Catholic hospitals. The foundation was critical of the billing practices of non-profit hospitals. During this time, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan was supporting legislation that would have mandated that non-profit hospitals tighten their billing and collecting procedures. Madigan also wanted to force these institutions to contribute more to charities, lest they risk their tax-exempt status. One ad from the Fairness Foundation said it was regrettable that the Attorney General had to get involved, “but as with other immoral actions,” it concluded, “apparently the church needs to be forced by lawyers to do the right thing, to be moral. How sad.” In May, a similar advertisement was also heard on a New York radio station.

February 22

Salt Lake City, UT – The Utah House passed a bill that allows for state and local governments to maintain, donate or sell property to groups “that want to place memorials including religious symbols in honor of public servants who have died in the line of duty.” The bill blocked an attempt by American

Atheists Inc., to remove metal crosses from roadsides that honor Utah Highway Patrol members killed on the job. American Atheists claimed that the crosses with the Utah Highway Patrol logo violated separation of church and state.

March 5

Chicago, IL – In an address at the Nation of Islam’s flagship mosque, Nation leader Louis Farrakhan said that the “Roman Church” is “the mother of White Supremacy,” does not represent Jesus and uses Jesus’ good name to shield its dirty practices.

March 13

Oshkosh, WI –The Freedom From Religion Foundation attempted to block the erection of a statue of an angel in a city park. The group’s co-president stated that religious imagery such as angels does not belong on public property.

April 18

Toledo, OH – A U.S. district judge said a Ten Commandments monument could remain in place outside the Lucas County Courthouse, because it did not promote religion. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio had sued the county in 2002 to have the display removed.

April 24

Los Angeles, CA – Lambda Legal, a civil rights organization that defends gays, lesbians and people with HIV/AIDS, asked the California Supreme Court to hear the case of a woman whose doctors refused to give her infertility treatment because she is a lesbian. The doctors claimed that performing such a procedure went against their fundamentalist Christian beliefs.

June 3

Des Moines, IA – A federal judge ruled that Prison Fellowship Ministries, a state-financed evangelical Christian program

used in prisons, violated the separation of church and state. Americans United for Separation of Church and State had filed a lawsuit against Iowa prison officials and the Ministries. Americans United claimed that the faith-based prison treatment program was unconstitutional because prisoners engrossed themselves in Christian values.

June 28

Elkins, WV – Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the West Virginia ACLU sued the Harrison County Board of Education, saying a painting of Jesus Christ hanging outside the principal's office sent the message that the school endorsed Christianity as its official religion. The school district was not going to fight the suit but, after private money was raised, changed its mind. After the portrait was stolen in August, someone gave the school, as a replacement, a mirror. The mirror had a brass plate at the bottom of it with an inscription that read, "To know the will of God is the highest of all wisdoms. The love of Jesus Christ lives in each of us." Both sides in the case eventually reached a settlement in October, without disclosing the terms of the agreement.

September 7

San Francisco, CA – The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of drag queens that dress up as Catholic nuns, hosted an event called Revival Bingo. Among the features of the game are getting the bingo chips to make a cross on the card and "one finger bingo," where the winner must stick up his middle finger to indicate Bingo. Another feature of the event is when one of the "nuns" yells out "Free s-t!" They then draw tickets from a bucket and winners get prizes, including pornographic DVDs and sex toys. A Revival Bingo event to be held in November, emceed by a drag queen known as Peaches Christ, was cancelled. Peaches hosted her own event called "Midnight Mass" throughout the summer and fall. Those events featured movies

considered “camp,” along with guest stars and “drag spectacles.”

September 8

Atlanta, GA – A federal judge ruled that the Cobb County Commissioners could continue to begin their meetings with prayers that invoke Jesus’ name. The ACLU had filed a complaint on behalf of several people, claiming the government was unconstitutionally endorsing Christianity by allowing the prayer.

November 2

Denver, CO – Five organizations, including Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Voice of the Faithful, demanded that the Denver Archdiocese release “all church documents relating to clergy sex abuse.” The groups also sent a letter that contained a lie to Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput. In the letter, the groups misrepresented the Archbishop; they stated that he was against legislation regarding victims of sexual abuse. In reality, the Archbishop was in favor of such legislation; he only objected to the fact that private and not public institutions were included in this law. Only when public institutions were included did the legislation fail. If SNAP and Voice of the Faithful were really interested in protecting children, they would have agreed with Archbishop Chaput, instead of making false accusations.

November 6

Green Bay, WI – Judge Mark Warpinski refused to recuse himself from a sexual molestation case involving a Catholic priest. Activist Attorney Jeffrey Anderson demanded that Judge Warpinski recuse himself because the judge was Catholic and was serving on the Board of Education of Notre Dame Academy. Attorney Anderson has made tens of millions of dollars suing the Catholic Church. He has attempted to sue the Vatican and

has called the seal of confession a “loophole.” Anderson is also one of the most generous benefactors to SNAP, which had issued a press release on November 4, making the same demand of the judge as Anderson did.

November 9

Las Cruces, NM – A federal judge dismissed a lawsuit that sought to stop the city of Las Cruces (whose name means “the crosses” in Spanish) from using three crosses on its logos. Plaintiff Paul Weinbaum said he had told the judge previous to his ruling that, no matter what the outcome, he would appeal. Weinbaum was also suing the Las Cruces schools on similar grounds. In 2003, Americans United for Separation of Church and State complained that Las Cruces using crosses in its logos amounted to an unconstitutional endorsement of religion.

November 17

Chicago, IL – The Rainbow Sash Movement issued a response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) statement on pastoral care to homosexuals. Rainbow Sash chose to attack the Church as a whole rather than just address the statement on homosexuals. The organization said, “To say faithful GLBT lovers cannot get married harkens back to [the] days of the Inquisition... Promoting discrimination against the GLBT Community flies in the face of Catholic Social Justice, and only further bankrupts the moral authority of the Bishops... Perhaps it is time for GLBT Catholics to rethink their passive roll [sic] and find more creative ways to create positive tension between our Bishops and the GLBT Community.”

November 20

Philadelphia, PA – A federal judge threw out a sexual abuse-related class-action lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Plaintiffs’ attorney Stewart J. Eisenberg attempted to sue the archdiocese and its current and former archbishops under racketeering laws. District Judge Legrome D.

Davis said the plaintiffs' claims did not sufficiently support a violation of such laws.

Simply suing the Catholic Church would not, per se, warrant inclusion in the Catholic League's Annual Report. This particular case is included because Stewart Eisenberg has a history of actions that only seek to make money at the Church's expense.

Additionally, Eisenberg knew that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia could not be sued for violating racketeering laws. He also knew that current Philadelphia Archbishop Justin Cardinal Rigali was not Archbishop when the alleged cover-ups of sexual abuse in the Archdiocese took place. Nonetheless, Cardinal Rigali was named as a defendant in this case. Eisenberg is an activist attorney with an agenda.

November 30

Washington, DC – The American Humanist Association announced the opening of a legal center in Washington D.C. The group's first project was participation in a lawsuit challenging the location of polling places in churches. In one case, a Florida man complained that he had to vote in a Catholic Church and, in the process, walk past a church-sponsored pro-life banner framed by multiple giant crosses.