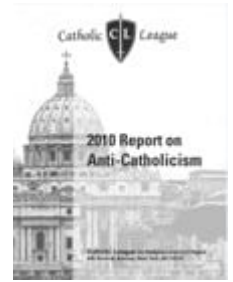


# Activist Organizations

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### January 12

In an article posted on TheWeek.com, Democratic consultant Bob Shrum took a shot at Catholic bishops for their opposition to abortion in the proposed health care bill: "Having abetted thousands of priests in molesting children, they're now set on abusing health reform."

We called for an apology. Shrum couldn't fight the bishops on the merits of the issue, so he resorted to mud throwing to silence them.

### January 20

The Freedom From Religion Foundation called for a boycott of the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) stamp commemorating the centenary of Mother Teresa. Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the group, led the campaign against the stamp citing that the USPS should not honor a religious figure. The USPS replied that Mother Teresa was selected because of her humanitarian work.

When asked about a previous stamp honoring Malcolm X, a leader of the Nation of Islam, Gaylor said, "Malcolm X was not primarily known for being a religious figure." She followed this statement by dressing-down Rev. Martin Luther King saying he "just happened to be a minister."

What really drove her hatred of Mother Teresa, besides her virulent anti-Catholicism, was the nun's opposition to abortion. Gaylor accused the nun of making an "anti-abortion

rant” during her Nobel Prize acceptance speech. In fact, the “rant” amounted to her saying that “abortion was the greatest destroyer of peace in the world.”

### **February 7**

**Eugene, OR** – A coalition of religious freedom advocates called on Oregon lawmakers to repeal a ban on religious attire for teachers in public schools. This group, which included the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, was opposed by the Oregon ACLU which argued that allowing teachers to wear religious garb could lead to the indoctrination of children.

### **February 9**

We commented on a report by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) on sex education. IPPF used the terms young people, youth and adolescents interchangeably to refer to people who are between the ages of 10 and 24. In other words, 5th graders should be treated the same way graduate students are when it comes to their “sexual and reproductive health and rights.”

The entire program was based on a faulty assumption. IPPF stated, “The taboo on youth sexuality is one of the key forces driving the AIDS epidemic and high rates of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality.” In the 1950s, there was no sex education in the schools, the pill was not commercially available and AIDS didn’t exist. Yet the out-of-wedlock birth rate was comparatively miniscule and sexually transmitted diseases were relatively rare. All because of taboos.

According to IPPF, “Fundamentalist and other religious groups—the Catholic Church and madrasas (Islamic schools) for example—have imposed tremendous barriers that prevent young people, particularly, from obtaining information and services related to sex and reproduction.”

### **February 16**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sued the federal

government claiming that the housing exemption given to churches is unfair because they can compensate their leaders with tax-free housing.

## **March**

**Knoxville, TN** – The anti-Catholic tract *The Death Cookie* by Chick Publications was distributed by members of the Conner Heights Baptist Church. The tract claims that the Church was founded by the devil and that Catholics worship a “wafer god.” After a protest by Knoxville Bishop Richard F. Stika, the pastor ended the distribution and admitted that he was “obviously not schooled in the Catholic religion.”

## **March**

**San Antonio, TX** – A college atheist organization at the University of Texas-San Antonio launched a campaign, “Smut for Smut,” in which one could exchange a Bible for pornography.

## **March 10**

**Heflin, AL** – A Christian radio station, Rejoice 89.1, left voice messages promoting a radio program “preaching against the Roman Catholic Church and telling people who the Roman Catholic Church really is,” and that “She [the Church] has killed more people than any other organization that has ever existed among mankind.”

## **March 11**

**San Francisco, CA** – The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the use of the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God We Trust” on U.S. currency. Michael Newdow, a prominent atheist, challenged these phrases stating that they are unconstitutional and infringe upon his religious beliefs.

## **March 30**

**Madison, WI** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation asked that state officials remove references to Good Friday as an official state holiday.

## **April 27**

**Charleston, SC** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter to the City of Charleston demanding that it remove a cross from the entrance of Charleston Fire Station No. 12. This was done after the FFRF issued a complaint in December 2009 that the same fire station displayed a nativity scene.

## **April 30**

**Colorado Springs, CO** – The Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) asked that the U.S. Army change the motto on the emblem of Evans Army Community Hospital; the motto reads, in Latin, “For God and humanity.” Mikey Weinstein, president of MRFF, said that the motto is a reference to the Crusades and could embolden U.S. enemies who want to portray the war on terror as a war between Christians and Muslims.

## **May 6**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation ran a full-page ad in the *New York Times* claiming the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional. The title of the ad was “God & Government: A Dangerous Mix.”

## **May 11**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, along with other secular groups, signed a letter protesting the oath taken by workers of the U.S. Census Bureau because it ends in “so help me God.” The letter contended that the oath leads employees to believe that there is a religious test for this office and is a violation of the Constitution. The letter also said that “the oath has the effect of stigmatizing non-monotheists as outsiders.”

Along with the FFRF, the letter was signed by American Atheists, American Ethical Union, American Humanist Association, Atheist Alliance International, Camp Quest, Council for Secular Humanism, Institute for Humanist Studies, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, Secular Coalition for America, Secular Student Alliance, Society for Humanistic Judaism,

United Coalition of Reason.

### **May 11**

The 7-foot high Mojave Desert Cross, that was erected to honor American soldiers who died in war, was stolen less than two weeks after a controversial court decision allowing the cross to remain on federal land. The National Park Service claimed it wasn't sure if the act was the work of scrap metal scavengers or those "with an interest in the case."

### **May 19**

The National Organization for Women called on authorities to investigate sexual abuse in the "male-dominated Catholic Church," claiming that "girls as much as boys" are victims. Indeed, the latest data show that the more priests have access to girl altar servers, the more the offending priests abuse males.

### **June 15**

American Atheists president Ed Buckner said that "religious conservatives like the Catholic League are behaving like Islamist fundamentalists" for opposing the proposed Comedy Central show, "J.C.," that promised to mock Jesus.

### **June 24**

**Louisville, KY** – Attorney William McMurry filed a lawsuit against the Vatican seeking to depose Pope Benedict XVI. McMurry contended that officials of the Catholic Church in Rome, including the Holy Father, knew about cases of priestly sexual abuse and then covered them up.

It is, of course, a staple of anti-Catholic thinking that every priest on the face of the earth follows lockstep with the orders from the pope. It is also the calling card of anti-Catholic thought that every instance of priestly wrongdoing is known to the Holy Father and his inner circle.

"I have yet to meet a Catholic, expert or otherwise," McMurry said, "who does not believe that the Holy See has the absolute

right to control the day-to-day activities of a bishop's work." Yet when even parents cannot possibly control the day-to-day activities of their children, only someone who is hopelessly naïve—or malicious—would contend that the pope is keeping tabs on them all day long.

Of McMurry's three clients: one said he "thinks" the local bishop knew of his alleged abuse; another maintained that he was molested over three decades ago; and the third contended that a priest touched him through his pants pocket in 1928.

### **June 29**

**Washington, D.C.** – The U.S. Supreme Court left standing a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that allowed an Oregon man to try to hold the Vatican financially culpable for a case of priestly sexual abuse that occurred in the 1960s. Though the priest was laicized in 1966, the plaintiff, who says he was abused, was pursuing the case because he wanted the Holy See to admit that the priest was an employee of the Vatican.

It should be noted that a month before this decision, the Obama administration sided with the Vatican holding that the Ninth Circuit erred in its ruling. We commended the Obama administration for being on the right side of the issue.

### **July 14**

**Chicago, IL** – The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, released an article that justified the Gestapo-like tactics of the Belgian police's raid of the Vatican. They defended the police claiming that the Belgian law enforcement team "cared more about vulnerable kids and wounded adults than protecting ecclesial authorities." SNAP ended the article by saying that "History, psychology and common sense all strongly suggest that the official church bureaucracy played, and still plays, an enormous role in hiding child-molesting clerics."

### **July 15**

**Washington, D.C.** – The Women's Ordination Conference's

executive director, Erin Saiz Hanna, issued a statement in response to the Vatican's position on female ordination. She said, "The Vatican's decision to list women's ordination in the same category as pedophiles and rapists is appalling, offensive, and a wake-up call for all Catholics around the world." She claimed that the Vatican is fearful of the organization's growing numbers. This was a flagrantly inaccurate rendering of what happened. Just because this issue appeared in a statement that addressed sexual abusers in no way means that the Vatican was equating the two matters.

### **July 16**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation released an article on the Vatican's position on female ordination. It asked, "Why would any one wish to be on the side of a church which has institutionalized child abuse and its cover-up, and now compounds its injury to women by the insult of declaring that their inclusion in the priesthood would be just as bad as a priest raping a 12 year old?" The article went on to say "The reason the Catholic Church attracts (and apparently is run by) so many perverts is because it perverts human nature by devaluing women."

### **July 22**

**Cranston, RI** – The ACLU asked a public high school to remove a banner that had been hanging in its auditorium since 1958. The phrase on the banner, which begins, "Our Heavenly Father," and ends with, "Amen," was considered a prayer by the ACLU and some parents who complained. The ACLU claimed that the banner "violates the constitutional separation of church and state."

### **July 23**

**Rogersville, TN** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation complained about a display called "Foundations of American Law and Government" in the county's Justice Center. FFRF claimed that the County Commission's Building Committee approved a display that was "heavily weighted with religious elements." Among the religious elements were the Ten Commandments, a

“historically inaccurate” painting of George Washington in prayer at Valley Forge, part of George Washington’s inaugural address that had “religious content,” a plaque with the words “Under God,” a plaque with the words “In God We Trust,” and two state resolutions that cited God.

According to the FFRF attorney, the basis for their complaint was, “The Ten Commandments have no relation to the ‘civic heritage’ of the United States. Our entirely secular Constitution makes no reference to them. Our leaders wisely shaped U.S. laws on fundamental principles of democracy and not on religious dogma.”

### **July 27**

**Dearborn, MI** – Members of the Christian group, Acts 17 Apologetics, were arrested for proselytizing at an Arab cultural festival.

### **August 11**

**Tampa Bay, FL** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation displayed billboards around the Tampa Bay and St. Petersburg areas in Florida that sported the slogan “In Reason We Trust.” The group’s co-president, Annie Laurie Gaylor’s reason for putting up the signs was, “We are offended to be left out of our national motto,” referring to “In God We Trust.” Gaylor said the phrase “excludes those who doubt or deny the existence of God, as well as those who believe in more than one God.”

### **September 9**

**Atlanta, GA** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation announced its plans to place 50 billboards advocating the separation of church and state in Atlanta. The billboards, paid for by the organization’s members, featured slogans such as “Imagine No Religion” and “Sleep In On Sundays.”

### **October 21**

**Chattanooga, TN** – After a complaint from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, a public high school in Tennessee was no



longer allowed to announce a prayer over the loudspeaker before football games.

### **October 29**

**Denver, CO** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation issued a complaint, claiming that Governor Bill Ritter's proclamations recognizing the National Day of Prayer are a state endorsement of religion, a violation of the Colorado Constitution's religious freedom clause. However, these arguments were dismissed after District Judge R. Michael Mullins ruled that it was perfectly constitutional for Ritter to recognize the National Day of Prayer.

### **November 16**

**Hanover, NH** – A federal appeals court found that it was not unconstitutional to require schools to schedule voluntary recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and that it doesn't force religion on students. This ruling came in a lawsuit brought on by a couple who claimed their children's rights were violated by being forced to recite the pledge of allegiance because it says "under God." The Freedom From Religion Foundation joined the couple to sue the local school districts and federal government, challenging the constitutionality of the New Hampshire School Patriot Act.

### **December 6**

PETA exploited Pope Benedict XVI in an ad encouraging people to spay and neuter their pets. "Pope Condom" was the caption on the ad, with a doctored image of the pope holding a condom.

### **December 9**

**Georgia** – Americans United for Separation of Church and State looked into how prominent the religious iconography is in New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in DeKalb County and Turner Chapel AME Church in Cobb County. Local school districts in those counties used them for graduations and Americans United made the claim that the prominence of the iconography violates the rights of students who are not Christian.

## **December 17**

**Phoenix, AZ** – Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmsted stripped St. Joseph's Hospital of its Catholic affiliation for performing an abortion. In its push to coerce the Obama administration to force Catholic hospitals to perform abortions, the ACLU referenced this case as further proof as to why abortions are "needed" and condemned Olmsted's decision.

## **December 21**

**Church Hill, TN** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation wrote a letter to library officials in Hawkins County about the display of a cross that sat atop a Christmas tree. They said it violates the establishment clause of the Constitution.

## **COALITION BUILDING**

In 2010 we were asked to join several efforts covering a wide range of issues: Joining a rally to end Muslim violence against Christians in Nigeria; Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons; Iran being elected to serve on the U.N.'s panel on women's rights; organ harvesting in New York State; and we joined with friends to protest a proposed Comedy Central show.

Bill Donohue spoke at a rally in front of the Nigerian embassy condemning the actions of violent Muslim mobs that killed Christians in the streets of Jos, Nigeria. Donohue cited an incident in which an innocent woman was murdered by a mob of angry Muslims. Her offense? Crossing the street during Friday prayers.

The Catholic League joined a coalition of activists, led by Newt Gingrich, to protest Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons. Bill Donohue wrote an op-ed about this issue in the *Washington Times*, and we registered our support for the U.N. action against Iran. It is important to note that Iran is a nation which continually gets cited by the U.S. State Department for its horrendous record on religious liberty. The persecution of Christians and Jews, and the putting to death

of anyone who converts from Islam, is bad enough. But when it is being done by a nation seeking weapons of mass destruction, it is cause for alarm.

Bernadette Brady, the league's vice president, signed a statement denouncing the election of Iran to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; it was signed by international human rights activists and women's rights leaders. The open letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the appointment of Iran to this body "shocks the conscience of civilized societies." There is something very sick about inviting a nation that oppresses women to serve on a U.N. commission on women's rights.

We also joined with New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind and other Jewish organizations in defeating a bill that would have presumed consent of organ donation.

Finally, we enlisted in a coalition to protest a show that Comedy Central was considering, an animated production mocking Jesus.