

CONGRESSIONAL ATHEISTS MAKE BOGUS CLAIMS

A congressional club for atheists? Yes, one was founded last month, but it did not get off to a roaring start: Of the 535 members of Congress, we can count on one hand how many members there are: four. There are probably more left-handed vegans on Capitol Hill than that.

So who are the members of the Congressional Freethought Caucus? Not surprisingly, they are all Democrats (this is the Party that threw God out of the 2012 Platform): Jared Huffman and Jerry McNerney of California, Jamie Raskin of Maryland, and Dan Kildee of Michigan. Huffman and Raskin are humanists who don't believe in God. McNerney and Kildee tell their constituents that they are Catholic; they need to update their resume.

Given that there are only four members of the Atheist Club, it is appropriate that they have four goals:

- Promoting public policy based on reason, science and moral values
- Protecting the secular character of U.S. government and the separation of church and state
- Opposing discrimination against atheists, agnostics, humanists, seekers, religious and nonreligious persons
- And providing a forum for members of Congress to discuss their "moral frameworks, ethical values, and personal religious journeys"

These claims are bogus.

Science tells us that life begins at conception. All the properties that make us human are present at fertilization—not months, or even days, later. It is striking to note that all four members of the Atheist Club ascribe to an unscientific

interpretation of the beginning of life.

For example, they have a 100% record from both Planned Parenthood and NARAL. They also have a 0% rating from the National Right to Life. They not only like abortion rights, they have voted against a congressional resolution to ban abortion after 20 weeks. Their beliefs, then, do not accord with reason or science: they are more akin to superstition.

They say they want to protect the secular character of the federal government and separation of church and state. This claim is also bogus.

The Declaration of Independence makes four references to God, holding that our inalienable rights come from our Creator, not politicians. The First Amendment protects religious liberty—something they fail to mention—and its reference to prohibiting “an establishment of religion” does not support their position: it was crafted precisely to guarantee religious liberty, not separation of church and state (which is nowhere mentioned in the Constitution).

Their third claim, opposing discrimination on the basis of beliefs, is likewise bogus: none of the four has a record of opposing discrimination against practicing Christians. More important, it is not atheists who are stigmatized in our society today, it is the faithful. From college campuses to media pundits and comedians, atheists are almost never the target of insults. No, the bigots save their heat for Christians.

As for having a place to talk about morality, ethics, and religious journeys, that’s what bars are for.

Much of the media hype about the Atheist Club has to do with the increase in the so-called “nones,” those persons who say they have no religious affiliation. The discussion typically assumes that this segment of the population is monolithic. This is another bogus claim.

In 2012, Gallup chief Frank Newport wrote that 80% of Americans were Christian, and that 95% of *“all Americans who have a religion are Christian.”* (His italics.) That number has decreased slightly since then, but not by much. He also found that more than 90% believe in God.

To be sure, the “nones,” or the “unaffiliated,” are growing: a 2015 survey by the Pew Research Center put the number at 16.1%. But only 1.6% of all Americans identify as atheist; 2.4% are agnostic; and 12.1% report “nothing in particular.”

A 2014 Pew survey found that one in three of the unaffiliated (34%) say that religion is either “very important,” or “somewhat important,” to them. Astonishingly, 61% say they believe in God; only 33% do not. Belief in heaven is held by 37% of the “nones,” but it drops to 27% when asked about belief in hell. One in five (21%) believe that the Bible is the word of God.

The data do not feed the narrative that the “nones” are mostly atheists, or that they have given up on God. Which means the Gang of Four who comprise the Atheist Club are less representative of America than either they, or the media, believe.

Recruiting new members will not be easy. How many people want to join a club where everyone sits around discussing why they believe in nothing? Can't imagine it taking too long.