

# KANSAS BILL PROTECTS CAMPUS RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

Kansas Senate Bill 175, which was introduced in February and was the subject of hearings by the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 9, would protect religious organizations on the campus of public universities from being subverted by their enemies. For many years, Catholic and Christian groups on colleges across the nation have been pressured to admit those who reject their mission: those seeking inclusion argue that they have a right to join, and even seek leadership positions, in these student clubs even though they do not accept the tenets of their faith. To what end? To bust them, of course.

Not surprisingly, those seeking to force their way into these groups are known for their assaults on religious liberty: Americans United for Separation of Church and State (the Great Plains chapter in Kansas is involved), and the American Civil Liberties Union, are leading the attack. They argue that the real issue is non-discrimination. It is not: Freedom of association is the paramount issue.

Twenty years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court held, in a unanimous decision, that the organizers of the St. Patrick's Day Parade had a First Amendment right to determine who was allowed to march. Justice David Souter argued that if those who are opposed to the mission of the parade were allowed to march, they would be able to veto the purpose of the parade. Citing freedom of association, the court ruled that the government has no authority to determine the strictures of a parade.

To be sure, the St. Patrick's Day parade is a private event, and the colleges in question are public institutions. But the operative right in both instances is freedom of association. Just as it makes no sense to allow the foes of a parade to participate, it makes no sense to allow the foes of a

religious student club to participate. No one is stopping the foes from organizing, but to permit them to trump the First Amendment rights of religious students is to grant them veto power. If religious groups cannot insist on fidelity to their tenets, their right to organize is meaningless.

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## **SPITTING ON JESUS**

After the fourth episode of this season's Netflix program, "House of Cards" aired, Bill Donohue asked those who receive our news releases to contact Jonathan Friedland, VP, Corporate Communications at Netflix, and ask him to explain why the character who plays the president of the United States, Frank Underwood, found it necessary to spit on the face of Jesus and then knock the crucifix to the floor, smashing it to bits.

Moreover, Donohue went on to say that those who receive our news releases may want to ask whether anyone at Netflix has any plans to spit into the face of Muhammad, or the mother of Netflix CEO, Reed Hastings.

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## **OBAMA PANDERS TO MUSLIM AMERICANS**

It is important to reassure Muslim Americans that they are not the enemy. Indeed, they should be as welcome here as any immigrant group. But there is no need to pander to them.

In his remarks at the end of the "Summit on Countering Violent Extremism," President Obama said, "Here in America, Islam has been woven into the fabric of our country since its founding." This is simply untrue: Muslims had nothing to do with the founding of America and their cultural contributions are practically non-existent.

Obama made matters worse when he offered, as proof of his remarkable contention, the following: "The first Islamic center in New York City was founded in the 1890s. America's first mosque—this was an interesting fact—was in North Dakota." Well, Mr. President, the last decade of the 19th century is not exactly close to the 1770s. He was right about the first mosque being in North Dakota, but he failed to say that was in 1929.

In the same speech, Obama said that "with the brutal murders in Chapel Hill of three young Muslim Americans, many Muslim Americans are worried and afraid." But the day before Obama wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that "We do not yet know why three young people, who were Muslim Americans, were brutally killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina." Then why pretend that the three were killed *because* they were Muslim?

Obama also said the day before that we need to listen to the voice of "former extremists" who say "It's not a revolution or jihad." We should also listen to those such as Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of the founder of Hamas; he was once deeply committed to jihad. After he converted to Christianity, he said of Islam, "It is not a religion of peace. The biggest terrorist is the God of the Quran...The more you follow the steps of the prophet of Islam and the God of Islam, the more you get closer to being a terrorist."

We need to have a mature conversation about this issue and stop the pandering.

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# OBAMA CLUELESS ON ISIS RECRUITMENT

Recently, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said that “lack of opportunity for jobs” is one of the most prominent “root causes” driving ISIS recruitment efforts. Soon after, President Obama addressed the same issue, echoing Harf’s explanation.

After acknowledging that “poverty alone does not cause a person to become a terrorist,” Obama immediately cited the central role of “economic grievances.” He was explicit: “When people, especially young people, feel entirely trapped in impoverished communities—where there is no order and no path for advancement, where there are no educational opportunities, where there are no ways to support families....[this is what] makes those communities ripe for extremist recruitment.”

A recent edition of the *New York Times* quoted some Muslim experts on this subject. One said that in his experience the young men drawn to join ISIS “came from a variety of family backgrounds.” Another said, “They can come from every ethnic, socioeconomic group, any geographic area.” In short, both reject the class analysis favored by the Obama administration.

Trying to get to the “root causes” of ISIS recruitment efforts makes good sense. Unfortunately, the left-wing lens used by the Obama team renders them blind to reality. It is not structural conditions that draw young men to join ISIS—it is psychocultural factors.

Laurie Goodstein, who wrote the *Times* article, correctly stated that many are enticed to join ISIS because “they feel alienated by life in the West and admit that they have been

vulnerable to the Islamic State's invitation to help build a puritanical utopia." Similarly, one of the experts she mentioned described the typical recruit as "an alienated young Muslim with a black-and-white worldview, looking for purpose and adventure."

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## THE TOTALITARIAN FACE OF ISIS

Beginning in 1966, at the outset of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards went on a rampage destroying museums and bulldozing graves. Now ISIS is doing the same thing in Iraq. Sledgehammers have been used to behead statues and other artifacts at the Mosul Museum—winged bulls dating to the seventh century B.C. have been smashed—a winged lion has been defaced, and other antiquities have been annihilated. Great works of art, extending to the ancient Assyrian empire, have been ransacked. This happened just a few days after the burning of the Mosul Public Library. In addition, tombs have been destroyed.

This is not the face of authoritarianism—this is the face of totalitarianism. Authoritarian dictators want to monopolize their power, but they have no interest in upending the past; they leave libraries, museums, and gravesites untouched. ISIS, following Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, wants to eradicate the collective memory of the people, which is why it goes beyond killing men, women, and children: by destroying ancient works of art, and turning over graves, the totalitarians seek to erase the past, thus paving the way for the future.

Totalitarians assault art and religion precisely because they bind people to their roots, thus creating an obstacle to the new social order. ISIS barbarians want to do more than kill

Christian Assyrians, and those who are not just like them—they want to kill everything that ties the present to the past.

The Obama administration does not understand ISIS because it does not understand the mind-set of totalitarians. It is dealing with an apocalyptic movement that is fueled by a desire to own the past, the present, and the future.

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## TIMES HAVE CHANGED

The picture below is from the Sunday edition of New York's *Daily News* commemorating Good Friday in 1962. It is a sign of the times that no illuminated crosses in lighted windows would ever be displayed today.



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# SECLARISTS ARE A SOCIAL LIABILITY

A couple of weeks ago, Gallup released a poll that details how the states vary on church attendance. Gallup's latest effort on measuring religious practices is drawn from its daily tracking interviews in 2014. It sought to tap how often Americans in each state attended church, synagogue, or mosque.

The study found that ten of the top 12 states with the highest religious attendance are in the South, along with Utah and Oklahoma. The least religious part of the nation is found in New England and the Northwest, with Vermont leading the pack.

Mormons are the most practicing of any religious group and they dominate in Utah; Baptists and blacks are also known for their church-going; this explains the high numbers in the South. New England and the Northwest are regions that are heavily secular.

From other studies, especially the work of the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, we know that the most religious states are known for their conservative values, and the least religious are bastions of liberalism. More important, the former are also the most generous, as measured by charitable giving and voluntarism, and the latter are the least generous.

Here's the bottom line: liberal secularists are a social liability, living off the moral capital of practicing Christians and Jews.

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# CHALLENGE TO HHS MANDATE STILL ALIVE

On March 9, the United States Supreme Court ordered a review of the University of Notre Dame's challenge to the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate and then sent the case back to the appellate panel for a review in light of the high court's ruling in the Hobby Lobby case. On February 21, 2014, the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the University of Notre Dame had to accept an accommodation to the HHS mandate that requires employers to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization.

The Hobby Lobby case was decided June 30, 2014, over four months after Notre Dame lost in the appeals court. In its ruling, the Supreme Court ruled that family-owned businesses could assert religious freedom interests in not complying with the HHS mandate. The 7th Circuit must now review its 2-1 decision taking into consideration the entire Hobby Lobby case. The Notre Dame case is the only one to challenge the HHS mandate that was decided prior to the Hobby Lobby case.

This is a good omen but it hardly settles the matter. Notre Dame is right to reject the accommodation: even though it is allowed to opt out, the effect of the accommodation is to force insurers to pay for abortifacients.