

September 2017
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Number 7

September Public Meeting Not on my dime: how school vouchers fund religion and harm public education



School voucher proponents have pushed legislation to fund private schools with public money in many states across the U.S., including in Minnesota. President Trump has proposed creating a \$20 billion federal voucher program. What can you expect if school vouchers continue to expand?

Patrick Elliott, Senior Counsel, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc. will discuss the harmful impact of vouchers and what we can do to stop their rapid expansion. Voucher schemes harm public education and overwhelming fund religious schools, violating the separation between church and state.

Patrick is an attorney with the Freedom From Religion Foundation and specializes in state/church advocacy and litigation. Patrick hails from St. Paul, Minnesota. He has advised the foundation on numerous state/church conflicts in Minnesota and across the country. Patrick has written extensively about school vouchers and has lobbied congress to oppose federal school vouchers.



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Sunday, May 21, 2017

1:00–1:15 p.m.: Social
1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting
1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break
2:00–3:30 p.m.: Program

Roseville Public Library
2180 Hamline Ave N
Roseville, MN 55113

4:00 p.m.: Dinner



News and Notes

The Good Friday counter-demonstration

By George Francis Kane

In a speech in 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant proposed that there should be an amendment to the United States Constitution prohibiting the spending of public funds on sectarian schools. Such an amendment, prohibiting any payments directly to a church or religion, was then proposed by Congressman James Blaine, but it narrowly failed to get the required 2/3 approval from the Senate. It was so popular, however, that similar bills, called “Blaine Amendments,” were introduced in many states. Today, 38 states, including Minnesota, have this clause in their constitutions.

The Supreme Court recently decided a case which may invalidate Blaine Amendments everywhere. A month before Justice Antonin Scalia died, the Court granted certiorari, agreeing to hear an appeal of the case *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*. The state of Missouri was subsidizing a program to permit schools and community centers to resurface their playgrounds with a coating made from recycled automobile tires. Missouri, because of its Blaine Amendment, refused an application from Trinity Lutheran Church. Trinity Lutheran appealed, claiming that this was religious discrimination, but the 8th Circuit Court upheld the decision in favor of Missouri, leading to the appeal to the Supreme Court. After Scalia’s death, however, Chief Justice Roberts would not put hearings for the case onto the Court calendar, since the Court was evenly divided ideologically. He feared the decision would be a 4 – 4 deadlock, which would permit the decision by the 8th Circuit Court in favor of Missouri to stand. As soon as Neil Gorsuch was sworn in, Roberts scheduled hearings in the case.

The decision was not as close as Roberts had feared. Only Justices Sotomayor and Ginsburg dissented from the judgment in favor of Trinity Lutheran. Roberts wrote the decision, with Alito, Kennedy and Kagan joining in full; Thomas and Gorsuch concurred, except for one footnote; and Breyer concurred only with the decision.

Justice Gorsuch wrote the partial concur-

rence, in which he was joined by Thomas. In a footnote to his decision, Roberts wrote that “this case involves express discrimination based on religious identity with respect to playground resurfacing. We do not address religious uses of funding or other forms of discrimination.” In other words, Missouri’s Blaine Amendment could not be applied only in this specific case. By implication, other exceptions might be found for cases in which a church would receive a purely secular benefit that did not advance its religious mission; but otherwise it did not overturn the Blaine Amendment.

The dissent by Gorsuch and Thomas rejected this footnote, holding that any instance of treating religion according to different rules than *The right of women and couples to plan their reproductive lives is the target of a broad range of continuous legal attacks by religious conservatives.*

apply to secular organizations constitutes discrimination and would be unconstitutional. They believe that if government subsidizes secular non-profits, it must also subsidize religion.

This dissent from Roberts’ footnote is tremendously important. It means that this footnote was supported by only four Justices — Roberts, Alito, Kennedy and Kagan — a minority of the Court. Gorsuch wrote that any discrimination against religion must be held unconstitutional, including prohibiting state grants for religious purposes. By denying Roberts’ footnote a majority, Gorsuch and Thomas left the scope of this ruling undecided.

According to the dissent by Sotomayor and Ginsburg, the Supreme Court had gutted the constitutional separation of church and state, and the last safeguards to ensure that government will be neutral with respect to religion. She wrote “If this separation means anything, it means that the government cannot, or at the very least need not, tax its citizens and turn that money over to houses of worship. The Court today blinds itself to the outcome this history requires and leads us instead to a place where separation of church and state is a constitutional slogan, not a constitutional commitment.”

Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer is just the opening bell of the struggle by

Continued on page 7

Cryptogram

By George Francis Kane

Uf ugh uqovr qhvblbfop tyd, Lfc bp dfu nhbdl
 ibugfou eoyvbubhp ... ugh chdbyv fs chuhqtbdyuh,
 mfpbubzh mqhcbwyuhp ... bp dfugbdl hvph
 ugyd y chdbyv fs qhvblbfd, ibug, gfihzhq, yd
 ymmhyqydwh fs qhvblbfd bd bup syzfq, pf ugyu
 bu bp dfu qhwfldbkhc, bu bp pbtmvr y ponuvh,
 cbplobphc yughbpt.

—Vocibl Shohqnywg,

Ugh Hpphdwh fs Wgqbpubydbur

Obituary

Thomas Dooley, 91, built a life around antiwar activism

By Emma Nelson, *Star Tribune*
(Reprinted with permission)



Thomas Dooley knew exactly what he believed — and the people around him knew it, too.

A bumper sticker on his car read “Stop the bombing” in large letters and “Reusable bumper sticker” in smaller letters. Servers at the restaurants where he ate routinely got antiwar buttons with their tips. And before he parted with his cash, he’d first cross out the word “God” on each bill.

Remembered for his dry humor, love of learning and dedication to the Twin Cities activist community, Dooley died July 4 in St. Paul. He was 91.

Dooley was born and raised in Minneapolis. His mother died when he was just 6 months old, leaving his father to raise Dooley and his older brother, Ken.

Dooley attended parochial schools growing up and served as an altar boy at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis. As an adult, he became an ardent atheist.

He went on to join the Air Force and trained as a bomber gunner during World War II — though the war ended before he was deployed.

“[He] didn’t serve overseas, and he was still opposed to war,” said his daughter, Mary Kay Edwards.

The war in Vietnam propelled Dooley into activism. He regularly participated in protests, Edwards said, and always referred to the conflict as the American War in Vietnam, rather than the Vietnam War.

At the time, Dooley and his wife were raising their children in Blaine. Opposing the war made Dooley stand out there, said friend and Vietnam veteran Craig Palmer.

“Coming out against the Vietnam War, living in the far suburbs, was a pretty courageous thing to do,” he said.

Dooley became involved in other progressive

causes, too. In the 1970s, he stopped by Blaine City Hall to talk to city officials about recycling — a topic that didn’t gain much traction at the time, Edwards said.

Dooley, a road maintenance worker and snowplow driver, also took an interest in labor issues. He joined the local chapter of the New Union Party and wrote a regular column for the party’s newspaper, the *New Unionist*.

“I think a lot of people always turned to Tom’s column first,” said friend George Kane. “There were others who tried writing about big current issues, whereas Tom’s was more humorous and folksy and personal.”

In addition to writing his column, Dooley would drive around town and deliver the newspaper himself, often with a friend in tow. Afterward, they’d stop somewhere to eat and have a few beers — favorite spots included Market Bar-B-Que and now-closed dive bars Arones and Stand Up Frank’s.

Dooley also wrote for the Veterans for Peace newsletter — a group he joined after retirement — and volunteered at MayDay Books, a leftist bookstore in Minneapolis.

Dooley was an avid reader, Edwards said. Though he didn’t attend college, he had a deep knowledge of history and politics built by devouring any book or newspaper he could get his hands on.

At the end of his life, a palliative care nurse asked Dooley about arrangements for after his death. As a veteran, he had the option of being buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

Dooley said no. He’d made other plans.

Nearly half a century before, he’d decided he didn’t want to be buried in a cemetery at all — instead, he’d signed up to have his body donated

The war in Vietnam propelled Dooley into activism. He regularly participated in protests, and always referred to the conflict as the American War in Vietnam, rather than the Vietnam War.

for research at the University of Minnesota.

Dooley is survived by children Mary Kay, Kevin, JoAnne, Terry and Todd, all of the Twin Cities area, and five grandchildren. At his request, a formal service will not be held.

MN Atheists Opportunity Saints Game Coordinator Needed for 2018 Game

By Heather Hegi

Would you enjoy working directly with the Saints to coordinate our next sponsored Saints Game?

Several people have expressed the concern that the Saints seem to highlight atheism in our sponsored game less and less every year. I think part of that is on us and putting too much burden on one person to be the go-between year after year. We had great ideas for antics, but there wasn't enough follow through with the Saints. We need someone fresh to serve as our Saints Sponsorship Coordinator if we want to continue doing this and doing it well.

We still see the benefit in continuing the tradition, this is the only professional sports team to feature an atheist night, but we need someone new to lead our efforts. A part of coordinating

this game should also be delegating advertisement of the game, getting our message out there, getting it out on social media and in the news, and making sure people know that this is a thing!

If you are enthusiastic about seeing this sponsorship continue to occur and are willing to expend some time and effort to make it happen, this just might be for you. As with all positions at Minnesota Atheists, this is an unpaid, volunteer position. Please contact us at info@mnatheists.org if you are interested.



Cable Report

By Steve Petersen

James Zimmerman interviewed Minnesota Atheists member and author Richard Maus on his recent book *Faith Enterprise*. Excerpts from the book were published in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter May/June 2017. View the program online on the Minnesota Atheists iTunes or YouTube channels. If you have an idea or expertise in a subject of interest to atheists, contact Steve Petersen at address@mnatheists.org.

Cable Crew: George Kane, Brett Stembridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Grant Hermanson and Art Anderson.

Podcasts: Available via iTunes and YouTube which are made possible by Grant Hermanson. To date, our YouTube channel has had over 300,000 downloads.

Cable schedule:

Minneapolis: Ch. 75. Monday 7:00 p.m.

Sponsor: Steve Petersen.

**Northwest Community Television (NWCT)
Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal,
Golden Valley, Maple Grove, New Hope, Osseo,
Plymouth and Robbinsdale,** Ch. 20. Check web page for date and times at <http://nwct.org/programming.aspx>.

Sponsor: Grant Hermanson.

St. Paul: Ch. 15 Wednesday 5:00 p.m.

Sponsor: Jim Wright.



Dinner with the Board Caribbean Theme

Sunday, October 1, 6:00 p.m.
Seven Oak Condominiums
3412 Oak Ridge Rd, Minnetonka, MN 55305

Enjoy a home-cooked, Caribbean themed, meal made by the Board of Minnesota Atheists whom you will also get to converse with and get to know better as the board will be dining with you.

RSVP through Meetup or make your payment in our website store. The cost is \$30 per seat, \$25 for dues-paying members and the proceeds will go to the Minnesota Atheists



speaker's fund. We will accept payment at the door, but paying beforehand is preferred.

This has been a popular event in the past so we are moving to a larger space at Seven Oak Condominiums which is in Minnetonka (bordering Hopkins). Arrive anytime from 6:00–6:30 p.m. Park in the lot behind the building and follow the sidewalk to the entrance. Signs will direct you to the elevator for the Party Room on the top floor.

With the Caribbean theme, enjoy Jerk Chicken, Rice & Beans, Pineapple, Bananas Foster, and more! Beverage selection will also be plenty, including a special theme inspired Spiked Punch. We will accommodate for dietary restrictions; just be sure to notify us by September 24th.

Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

Membership Levels

- One-year student membership \$10
- One-year individual membership \$35
- Three-year individual membership \$90
- One-year household membership \$45
- Three-year household membership \$115
- One-year sustaining membership \$75
- Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- Life membership \$600

Donation Funds

General Fund \$ _____

Building Fund \$ _____

Radio Fund \$ _____

Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. All other memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

Please make checks payable to:

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Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

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(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

News and Notes continued from page 2

conservative Christians to completely overturn the Blaine Amendments. They look to gain direct state funding of sectarian schools, and an un-abridged right to state subsidies.

Cryptogram Answer

To the truly religious man, God is not being without qualities ... the denial of determinate, positive predicates ... is nothing else than a denial of religion, with, however, an appearance of religion in its favor, so that it is not recognized as a denial; it is simply a subtle, disguised atheism.

Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*

Upcoming Events

FFRF National Convention September 15–17, Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, 1 John Nolen Dr, Madison, Wisconsin. Register at <https://ffrf.org/outreach/convention/2017-national-convention>

Freethought 5K for Camp Quest Sunday, September 24 from 8:00 AM–12:00 PM, Lake Nokomis Main Beach, 5001 W Lake Nokomis Pkwy, Minneapolis. Run or walk, collect bracelets from Freethinker stations, raise money for Camp Quest North, \$30 Registration.

Dinner with the Board (See page 10) Sunday, October 1 at 6:30 PM, 3412 Oak Ridge Rd, Minnetonka. Register online, \$25 for members.

Atheists Talk Community Brunch 1st Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM, Q. Cumbers, 7465 France Ave S, Edina.

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous Every Sunday from 6:00–7:00 PM and Wednesday from 7:00–8:00 PM, Health Recovery Center building, lower floor, 3249 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis. Based on A.A., minus beliefs in any form of a God.

Freethought Toastmasters Meeting 1st and 3rd Monday of every month from 6:30–8:00 PM, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul. freethought.toastmastersclubs.org

Godless Gamers Every Thursday at 6:00 PM, Fantasy Flight Games Center, 1975 County Rd B2, Roseville.

Freethought Dinner Social 2nd and 4th Monday of every month from 5:00–7:00 PM, Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave S, Bloomington.

Freethinking Females 2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 PM, Claddagh Irish Pub, 7890 Main St N, Maple Grove, and 4th Monday of every month at 7:30 PM, Sweeney's Saloon, 96 North Dale Street, St. Paul (Note, two different locations). Shattering the myth that Atheist groups are male dominated with a female's only event.

Volunteer Food Packing 2nd Thursday of every month at 1:00 PM, The Food Group, 8501 54th Ave N, New Hope.

Blasphemer's Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 AM, Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield.

Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30 PM, Amherst H Wilder Foundation, 451 Lexington Pkwy N, St Paul. All Minnesota Atheists members are welcome.

Bowling for Deities Last Saturday of every month at Noon, Memory Lanes, 2520 26th Ave S, Minneapolis.

For more events, visit www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists



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Minnesota Atheists

Positive Atheism in action since 1991

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

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Minnesota Atheists Goals

Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly, neighborhood atheism in order to provide a community for atheists, educate the public about atheism, and promote separation of state and church.

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and Ethical Union, and

Secular Coalition for

America.

Minnesota Atheists Membership

Regular members: 218

Life members: 43

Meetup members:

2,400

Minnesota Atheists Honorary Members

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Annie Laurie Gaylor

Dick Hewetson

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