

SECULAR COLORADO

Hub | HOC | BA | FFRF | SA | SVC | AU | JH

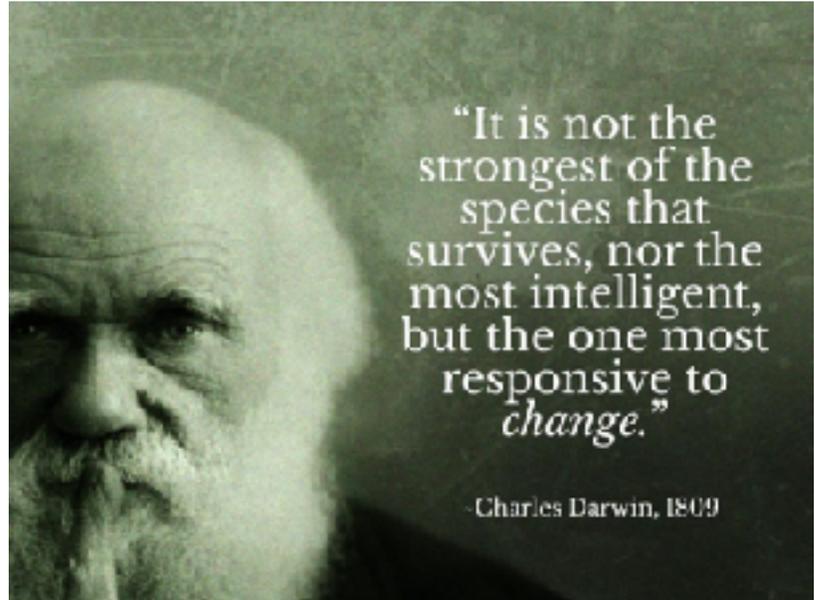
No Newsletter Next Month

At 17 pages, this is the largest issue of Secular Colorado so far, and we even left out some other content we received, sorry about that. It covers some February events like Darwin Day, which is good, because the next issue is planned for March.

This newsletter is an all-volunteer effort. Please consider contributing to its content, or even taking a turn as editor. The look-and-feel has not changed since its inception two years ago. Wouldn't you like to do something about that?

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Darwin Day at the Hub

Sunday, February 12, 6:30 PM, Secular Hub

The Hub opened its doors on Darwin day some years ago, and every year we have a grand time. This year the Hub and the HOC are co-sponsoring a talk about a book about Darwin.

Look forward to a lively discussion on "What Darwin got Wrong", a book by Fodor and Piattelli-Palmarini from the perspective of Jeff Mitton, professor of biology at the U. of Colorado. He will address the current state of modern studies of natural selection, and what has been accomplished with artificial selection.

For 17 years, on top of being a professor of biology at CU and having a research program and a full teaching load Jeff Mitton has been a Science Columnist at the Boulder Daily Camera, with a biweekly column entitled "Natural Selections". He writes about the ecology and evolution of the animals and plants that people encounter while hiking in Colorado and the Colorado Plateau.

SECULAR HUB

Comedian at the Hub

The main reason our comedy show went off so well is that the Hub has a ringer from the world of comedy.

Andrew Curtis Forlines, who organized and emceed the evening, is a multi-talented volunteer. He started and helps manage the Member Facebook Group, and also runs the Secular Hub Book Club.

Andrew, a chef by trade, has broad experience in comedy.

- He is a cast member of the elimination Improv comedy competition show, “Denver’s Next Improv Star”, coming to the Bovine Metropolis Theater
- He hosts a weekly comedy show, “FUNNY AF”, at the Voodoo Comedy Playhouse (Tuesdays 10:00 PM - 11:30 PM)
- He is involved in “Peer Revue”, in which scientists give humorous presentations in their area (February 10 at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science)

Why not attend the next Hub Book Club meeting, and tell Andrew what a great job he is doing? (And, tell him to make Comedy Night a regular event at the Hub.)

Comedy at the Hub

On Saturday, January 14th, comedy came to the Hub!

This was not the first time. Comic musician Roy Zimmerman has appeared at the Hub twice, various speakers have thrown a lot of comedy into their presentations, and one of the Hub’s founders organized a comedy night some time ago. Last year the HOC even hosted an improvisational comedy workshop.

But this time felt different. For one thing, alcohol was available through a special-event liquor license, and the room was packed. Alcohol and a crowd make anything more ... well, more of that thing, in this case funny.

And, this show featured no fewer than nine individual comedians (including the excellent emcee, see sidebar at left) Most of the performers were hilarious, and their styles varied. Two or three featured dry wit reminiscent of Steven Wright, one highlighted racial differences and thereby did Richard Pryor proud, one tried a Kaufmanesque assault which of course fell flat, and the evening ended with a comic magician.

I feel safe mentioning these famous comic styles without fear of disrespecting the performances at the Hub, because none of these comedians was a hack trying to copy a famous bit. In fact all seemed to do original material. (Well, the magician’s tricks were not new, but he proved to be quick-witted in going beyond the usual magician’s patter.) The performers were clearly delighted when the jokes they had invented brought huge laughs. (The actor of one of the best jokes of the night, with punchline “You still have to wear a condom”, said he didn’t like the joke, but couldn’t deny that it got big laughs.)

Comedy is an art, and a difficult one. Comedians take inspiration from each other, not unlike jazz musicians. And like jazz, nobody much succeeds at comedy without being extremely talented. (Except Miles Davis)

Ever notice how many comedians are able to win Academy Awards as actors? Tom Hanks, Robin Williams, Jamie Foxx, Michael Keaton. It’s the hardest gig in show business, and it seems we have a solid scene in Denver.

BOULDER ATHEISTS

Who We Are

The Boulder Atheists is a community of atheists, secular humanists, agnostics, scientific naturalists, rationalists, freethinkers, Brights, and other non-theists in Northern Colorado. Members of the group live in Boulder, Longmont, Louisville, Lafayette, Broomfield, Superior and surrounding communities in the greater Denver-Boulder metropolitan area. The group is a diverse mix of conscientious individuals including business professionals, parents, teachers and students, entrepreneurs, and retired individuals who seek to live ethical and moral lives using evidence-based reasoning and science.

As a group, the Boulder Atheists wish to promote the understanding and acceptance of atheism with public education, good deeds and public activities. Although we welcome members who wish to discuss the subject of non-theism, our main goal is activism and community. To see a sample of our previous meetings and events, visit our [Past Events page](#).

Membership in the Boulder Atheists is open to anyone who identifies with a non-theist, naturalistic world view. Dues are \$30 per year.

Winter Solstice Report

Boulder Atheists held their annual Winter Solstice Party on December 18th at BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse in Boulder. Due to the cold wet weather which deterred many members from participating, the event was changed from an all-you-can-eat buffet to a Family style dinner where we all sat around one large table. There was a house salad, pizza and of course spaghetti and meat balls in order to honor the Flying Spaghetti Monster. About 16 members braved the cold weather to attend and everyone settled in for a special evening of great conversation with like-minded fellow atheists. Due to the anticipated threats to our secular government by the incoming President-elect and his hand chosen administration, a collection was taken for a donation to The Freedom From Religion Foundation in order to help them defend our rights as a secular nation. Over \$60 dollars was collected and sent to FFRF, for which we received a nice Thank You note.

Our next Monthly Membership meeting will be held on January 22nd at the Main Boulder Public Library. We will be meeting in the Flagstaff Room instead of the Boulder Creek Room. The Flagstaff room is just to the right of the Boulder Creek Room where we have always met in the past. The meeting will start shortly after the library opens at 12:00 Noon. At this meeting we will present several videos by prominent scientists on the subject of "Can science prove that a god does not exist?", "What exactly is science?" and how can a god be defined. The remainder of the meeting will be open to comments and discussion on those topics. There will be coffee, drinks, and snacks available. Afterward we will walk over to the Mediterranean Restaurant at about 2:15 PM to share lunch and more conversation.

At the last Boulder Atheists Board Meeting a suggestion was made that the Monthly Membership Meetings, which have always been held on the 4th Sunday of each month, might be more convenient if they were held on a weekday evening. Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday seem to be the best options since Thursday would interfere with the Thursday lunch and Coffee social gathering and who wants to attend an Atheists meeting on a Friday night. We on the board are looking for feed-back on this proposal from anyone who attends or plans to attend the Monthly Meetings. Please feel free to leave a comment on the BA discussion board at Meetup.com, or send a comment to info@boulderatheists.org or a comment on the Facebook page.

JEFFERSON HUMANISTS

POLITICAL ACTION TASK FORCE

Members of the Jefferson Humanists and others from the local secular community have started an exciting political action task force initiative. Although not yet officially sanctioned by the JH, the initial energy came from JH members, especially Ralph Hughes, the Chair and Founder. The JH Board of Directors will vote at their next meeting whether to make the task force a real JH program, and they have already allowed meetings to be announced on the JH Meetup site.

The disgruntled Americans who voted for the incoming administration may believe that Trump will simply “shake up” Washington, but many within the Humanists community and others fear they have unleashed a very destructive force. The cabinet nominations to date suggest a turn towards crony capitalism, disregard for the rule of law, and even the militarization of our civilian government.

Members of the Jefferson Humanists are gathering volunteers from all the local secular groups as well as other concerned citizens. It is really taking off. On Monday, January 10th, the third meeting took place, with about 15 persons attending, including two board members of the Denver Secular Hub.

Upon urging of the JH board, over a dozen of us have formed a political action taskforce to resist this calamity until the political tide turns again. Though the name and objectives for this taskforce are a work in progress, regular organizational meetings are underway. We invite everyone concerned about the next administration to join us, whether a JH member or a concerned citizen of the larger secular community.

On January 15th, the task force is joining forces with MoveOn.org, a liberal national political organization, for a special orientation event. MoveOn is sponsoring a nationwide campaign for groups all over to take part in an organized information and training program. Topics include how to train-the-trainer, how to attract members, how to effectively contact politicians, networking techniques and other action items. The goal is aimed at helping to start a grass roots movement with local organizations working in harmony with other groups. The number one objective is to stop Trump and his horrifying agenda. Other great liberal causes, such as human rights issues and the separation of church and state will also be addressed.

For more info about joining our task force, contact Ralph Hughes: ralph.hughes@yahoo.com

JEFFERSON HUMANISTS

Jefferson Humanists Happenings in January

JH Monthly Meeting - Evolution: From Darwin to the Present Day

With Dr. Garth Spellman

Sunday, January 22, 2017, 5:00 PM

Jefferson Unitarian Church

14350 W 32nd Ave, Golden, CO

Sponsored by the Jefferson Humanists, our monthly program will be held at the JUC, Sunday, January 22, 5 PM. Our monthly speaker is Dr. Garth Spellman, Curator of Ornithology, Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Using genetic tools to examine "bird DNA footprints," his research focuses on how recent and ancient environmental changes have affected bird species. Bird species are products of their environment and therefore are constantly evolving in response to environmental change. How have current bird species changed over time, and how will they respond to future changes in their environment?

Following the talk and Q & A session, all are invited to stay for informal socializing over a glass of wine and a light buffet dinner, both for a small donation. Also, you may browse through our library and check out a book.

RSVP for Food and Beverages: After the presentation, a light buffet and wine will be served. (Suggested donation of \$8 for food and \$3 for wine.) To make sure we have enough food and drink, please RSVP to this Meetup <http://meetu.ps/34QHqw> OR by email/phone to Barb Bailey (barbaile@aol.com, 303-979-0508).

FROG Book Discussion Meeting - Topic: Famous Humanists

On January 14th in Lakewood, the Jefferson Humanists' book group, FROG (Freethinkers Reading Opportunity Group), discussed Famous Humanists. This was a slightly different format than most meetings. Various books and articles were read, by or about a famous humanist, and discussed. Each attendee shared Information about their humanist. The group examined what it means to be a humanists and how these well-respected humanists changed our world for the better. It was a very lively and captivating discussion.



We'll fight like hell — with your help

By FFRF Managing Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert

January 13, 2017

The 115th Congress began earlier this month, and a new president will be inaugurated in a week's time. We know both branches of government pose a serious threat to our cherished constitutional principle of separation between state and church. We need your help ...

FFRF is already working hard to ensure cabinet officials are properly vetted during their nomination hearings. We are also bracing for legislative battles to overturn secular policies we once thought secure. And then there's the issue of the current vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court – and potential future vacancies.

We're going to have to work hard to ensure this new administration doesn't undo in our lifetime every good thing to happen to freedom of conscience, scientific progress, and personal and civil liberties. And it's going to require ALL of our best efforts.

Become a citizen lobbyist – it's easy!

You can be active through lobbying your own representatives. It's easy to do – and very effective. I know because I worked on Capitol Hill right out of college.

Constituent feedback is important to representatives — lest you think it doesn't matter or they don't pay attention. They do. I worked in a Senate office during the George W. Bush administration when the country was debating the Iraq War. My boss received thousands of letters on this issue. (This doesn't include faxes, emails, and phone calls.) They're barraged with mail from ordinary people like you.

Every day, staff members were tasked with sorting the mail and tallying contacts: "Yes to war" versus "No to war." We'd count by hand the letters we received, then add to it the tally from phone calls and emails and faxes. Every night, my boss would get that tally, which included how many total contacts, totals in the yes and no columns, and then a breakdown on in-state versus out-of-state contacts. And he requested a sampling representative of the mail he was receiving – so, four-six letters usually. There was no way he could read them all, but every night he expected to see that total.

He paid attention to what his constituents were saying and why. He took that into consideration when casting his vote, and so do current members of Congress. And while my boss was very cognizant of what the people of his state wanted I know this story was not unique on the Hill. Many staffers for other representatives were tasked with similar duties.



We'll fight like hell — with your help

By FFRF Managing Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert

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What you say and how you say it matters. Here are a few tips on making legislative contacts effectively.

1. Write a letter or email

Postcards and petitions are fine, but they don't get the same type of attention that a personally written letter or email does. It's easy to tally a mass-generated postcard or get a number from a petition and continue with the day, but having to read a personalized message and figure out what a constituent is writing about and why makes a lasting impact. If I had to read a letter to figure out if a constituent is in the yes or no column, I remembered their story and was more likely to put it in the representative sampling of letters my boss would receive.

Twitter and Facebook didn't exist back then, but my comrades who are still on the Hill say that tweeting your legislator or writing on Facebook is ineffective. They don't read them or do anything with them unless the messages are harassing (or perhaps going viral).

2. Call the office – email is the next best thing

It's always better to make a connection the old-fashioned way by calling someone on the phone. Make them talk to you about the issue. And, by the way, they have to be nice to you and take down all your information! (But please extend the same courtesy and be nice to them – they don't need to respond to people being vulgar.)

You can also make a huge statement with call-in campaigns. The days when our front office staff was flooded with calls affected every staff member. I was also on staff when Elian Gonzalez, a young Cuban boy, was attempting to come to America with his mother. She perished in the ocean, but he was rescued and sent to live with relatives in Florida. His Cuban relatives were trying to get him back. It was a very hot issue in 2000 (before the election, of course!), and we were flooded with calls on what the United States should do – send him back or keep him here. It stymied the work of the office. It got so bad, all staffers had to take a shift on the phones – senior and junior staffers alike.

You can be sure when a senior policy advisor is pulling a shift on the front phones, the senator or member of Congress is going to hear about it!

A personalized, unique email message is far more effective than a mass template, so when possible, add your own language. FFRF is introducing software that will make the Action Alerts we'll be sending you easier for you to use, whether you choose to phone or email.



We'll fight like hell — with your help

By FFRF Managing Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert

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3. Make a connection with your representatives' staff members

If you can make a connection to the staff members in your representatives' home offices, that will be helpful. If they know who you are, your thoughts will likely come up during staff meetings. You may also be called on for your opinion if you're able to demonstrate expertise in a particular issue area.

4. Show up at a town hall or city council or county board meeting

This can't be emphasized enough. They cannot ignore you and your questions if you're standing right in front of them. Go to a town hall and ask them to explain their positions. Go to the city council and county board meetings and let them know you exist, you're one of their constituents, and they're accountable to you. Recently, FFRF was able to help the city of Madison pass an ordinance that includes atheism as a protected class. This was in large part because our attorneys Patrick Elliott and Andrew Seidel and some local members showed up at committee and council meetings and met with the alders about this. They were able to answer their questions and quell their fears.

With this new administration, it's not going to be easy. But it's nothing new – nothing our movement hasn't seen before.

We've harnessed energy to get out there after devastating blows to the wall of separation, like the recent *Town of Greece v. Galloway* decision, which upheld the practice of prayer, even sectarian prayers, before legislative meetings. Our members have been outspoken. They've been coming out of the closet and delivering secular invocations at city council and county board meetings across the country. We're turning negatives into positives.

And we've seen positive changes – changes that seem inconceivable even a decade ago. When I started at FFRF eight years ago, we had 12,000 members. Now, we've more than doubled that. When I started at FFRF, I'd take calls on state/church complaints and members would tell me they were the only atheists in their town. But now, we receive calls from multiple people about the same issues in the same town. We're still witnessing phenomenal growth in the United States of the nonreligious. A quarter of adults and a third of Millennials identify as having no religion. This movement cannot be denied.

FFRF is going to be fighting like hell to make sure the Christian Right doesn't trump reason and our First Amendment. We'll be working overtime to safeguard our constitutional right to be free from the imposition of religions and religious doctrine from our government. But we can't do it alone. We need your help, and hope this short primer will give you confidence about how easy it is for you to affect legislative change.

We're fired up and ready to take this on. You should be, too.

AMERICANS UNITED

For the separation of church and state

New President, New Congress, New Challenges

What To Expect For Church-State Separation In 2017 – And Beyond

By Rokia Hassanein

Reprinted from Church and State January 2017 . Church and State is the official magazine of Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU). Founded in 1947, AU is religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington DC. The organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom. You can write to AU at 1310 L St., NW, Suite 200, Washington DC 20005. Their website is www.au.org and you can email them at americansunited@au.org

Donald J. Trump's surprising presidential victory has sparked anxiety among religious and non-religious minorities, women, the LGBTQ community and others. Lots of people are speculating about the challenges on the horizon for the next four years.

Regardless of whether or not Trump was merely playing the role of a devout Christian to stock up on votes, one thing to know for sure is that the Religious Right is expecting a lot from him in return - and he's already hard at work returning the favor.

According to post-election data from the Pew Research Center, white evangelical Christians backed Trump at a slightly higher percentage (81 percent) than they did George W. Bush, Mitt Romney (both receiving 78 percent) and John McCain (74 percent). And, in return, this constituency will expect Trump to comply with its demands.

Trump's campaign promises raise a lot of concerns. If he walks the walk and is backed by the Republican-majority Congress, the road to preserve true religious freedom and church-state separation could be a rocky one.

Trump wasted no time assembling advisors and a cabinet that generated controversy. He quickly appointed Steve Bannon, who runs a website that has spewed hateful speech toward Jews, Muslims and Catholics, as his chief strategist.

By appointing Bannon, Trump may have pleased his hardcore base, but the move left many others feeling uneasy. Bannon has ties to white nationalism and an extreme movement known as the "alt-right," a loose conglomeration of mostly young white men who use the internet to spew racist, anti-immigrant and misogynistic views.

Shortly after the election, Trump appeared on "60 Minutes" and when asked, said he's "saddened" by the rise in hate crimes perpetrated by some of his supporters, and he called on them to stop. But he also quickly diverted the blame to the media and seemed unwilling to accept that the racially charged rhetoric he employed during the campaign may have played a role.

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"I think it's horrible if that's happening. I think it's built up by the press because, frankly, they'll take every single little incident that they can find in this country, which could've been there before," Trump told CBS correspondent Lesley Stahl. "If I weren't even around doing this, and they'll make into an event because that's the way the press is."

But Trump critics say he must take responsibility for his often-heated rhetoric. In the first week alone following Trump's win, 315 hate-inspired incidents, a majority targeting Muslims, were reported, according to a Southern Poverty Law Center report.

Religious minorities are bracing for at least four years of hostility toward them. Trump's attempt to blame the media does not overshadow the fact that one of his top campaign talking points was that he would ban, register or suspend Muslim immigrants from entering the United States.

Trump never offered a specific plan, however, and his proposals have been all over the map.

Concerns heightened when Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach (R) was floated as director of the Department of Homeland Security. While working under the Bush administration's Justice Department, Kobach was in charge of the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, which primarily targeted male immigrants from Muslim-majority countries in what administration officials insisted was an anti-terrorism effort.

The program was essentially shut down by the Obama administration in 2011 when it delisted all 25 countries from the program, although it was clear even as early as Bush's first term that the program was not working. The infrastructure remains, however, and Kobach has proposed updating and reinstating that system, even though the program never led to even one terrorism conviction.

Trump's incoming chief of staff and GOP Chairman Reince Priebus said during a Nov. 20 appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press" that he wouldn't rule out banning immigrants from war-torn countries as long as it's not explicitly a "Muslim ban." (For more on the Muslim reaction to Trump's election, see "Fear Factor," page 10.)

And with Bannon and possibly Kobach as a part of his administration, Trump's decision to nominate U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), who has previously described church-state separation as an "extra-constitutional doctrine" and "a recent thing that is unhistorical and unconstitutional," to be attorney general signals the far-right direction his upcoming administration appears to be heading.

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Sessions has attacked secular government, supports government-erected Ten Commandments displays, backs creationism being taught in public school science classrooms, has called a Muslim ban “biblical” and believes religious views can trump reproductive and LGBTQ rights.

He’s openly expressed his support for taxpayer money funding religious schools. He’s questioned Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s ability to perform her job because he didn’t perceive her as a “religious” Catholic, and he demanded restoring the “so help me God” oath for Judiciary Committee swearing-in ceremonies in 2001.

Sessions’ stance on church-state separation is so extreme that in 1999, he unsuccessfully tried to prosecute Americans United for “voter intimidation” because AU had sent faith leaders letters reminding them that endorsing political candidates at their respective house of worship violates a provision of federal law and hence endangers their tax-exempt status.

Throughout the campaign, Trump called repeatedly for repealing the provision, known as the “Johnson Amendment” for its sponsor, then-U.S. Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Texas). If he’s successful in winning an outright repeal, that could allow churches to endorse or oppose candidates.

This concerns Americans United because the Johnson Amendment protects the integrity of elections, as well as the integrity of houses of worship.

Other Trump appointees, and proposed appointees, have been problematic. Some appear to be unqualified. Trump even offered creationist Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University, the largest evangelical university in the country, the job of secretary of U.S. Department of Education.

Though he didn’t accept the position, Falwell met with Trump and Vice President-elect Mike Pence to discuss it. Falwell told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* on Nov. 15 that he’s “willing to serve in some capacity” within the department.

Trump then gave the top education post to Betsy DeVos, a Michigan Republican Party activist best known for promoting private school vouchers.

With DeVos as Secretary of Education and Falwell as a possible advisor, two pro-voucher and anti-LGBTQ rights voices, public school funding, science curricula and the Obama administration’s Joint Guidance to Help Schools Ensure the Civil Rights of Transgender Students are all threatened.

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"The appointment of Betsy DeVos to oversee the U.S. Department of Education is an insult to public education," Barry W. Lynn, AU's executive director, said in a Nov. 23 statement. "DeVos is a divisive figure who has spent much of her career working to privatize public education."

With DeVos running the show, Trump will have a vocal advocate for vouchers in charge of education. During the campaign, he called for spending \$20 billion on block grants to states to implement "choice" plans.

Another troubling appointee is U.S. Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.), a man who believes religion can be used as a reason to restrict women's healthcare and LGBTQ rights, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

AU Legislative Director Maggie Garrett said that under Price, HHS could repeal the regulations that ensure that more than 55 million women have insurance coverage for contraception without out-of-pocket costs.

The rights of LGBTQ Americans could also take a hit. As Garrett noted in a post on AU's "Wall of Separation" blog, Price is a co-sponsor of the misleadingly named "First Amendment Defense Act" (FADA).

"This bill," Garrett wrote, "would allow businesses, private individuals, and even taxpayer-funded social service providers and government employees to ignore any laws that conflict with a 'religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman' or that sex outside of such a marriage is sinful."

Trump's vice president, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, is also expected to be an influential voice in the administration. Pence, a social conservative and favorite of the Religious Right, could become an unusually powerful vice president.

An outsized role for Pence could be especially bad for the LGBTQ community, and the country could see a retreat from the progress it's made to advance equality for all.

While it's debatable whether Trump, a thrice-married womanizer who has bragged about sexually assaulting women and getting away with it, is truly a changed man of devout Christian faith, there's little debate where Pence stands. He's a hero to the Religious Right.

Pence's fundamentalist views include supporting "conversion therapy," a discredited, disturbing and dangerous practice that claims to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. While running for Congress in 2000, Pence proposed diverting HIV-prevention money to the practice, which has been condemned by mental health professionals.

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He also backed a proposed 2006 amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would have defined marriage as only between a man and a woman, saying that marriage equality would lead to “societal collapse” and calling homosexuality “a choice.”

In 2007, Pence voted against protecting LGBTQ people from workplace discrimination; in 2010, he opposed repealing the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which prevented service members from identifying as openly LGBTQ while serving.

Pence’s anti-LGBTQ record seems endless, as does his track record of limiting women’s reproductive rights. Pence has some of the most extreme anti-choice stances of any public figure.

He has gutted funding for Planned Parenthood in Indiana as governor. He signed multiple anti-choice laws that restricted women’s access to abortion, regardless of whether they got pregnant through rape, incest or whether the pregnancy endangered their health.

But Pence may be best known for supporting and signing a controversial “religious freedom” law that was intended to allow Indiana residents to cite their religious beliefs as an excuse to discriminate against others. Although the law was allegedly fixed after a public outcry, it remains deeply flawed.

If Pence does indeed fill the void of Trump’s inexperience with his ideas, the state of constitutional rights in the country could be altered significantly, and it starts with the Supreme Court.

Presidents can push ideas, and Congress can turn them into laws, but if they aren’t constitutional, they won’t survive high court review. The precariously balanced court currently has just eight members. Trump has vowed to nominate an Antonin Scali-like justice to the open seat.

During the “60 Minutes” interview with Stahl, Trump said that appointing a pro-life Supreme Court justice will be important in overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling, which recognized women’s constitutional rights to access safe and legal abortions in the United States.

While his road to overturning *Roe v. Wade* may be more complicated than he thinks, Trump could certainly severely restrict reproductive health care access nationwide with Price as Secretary of HHS.

All of this means that the future of reproductive access is murky, and during the Trump years, efforts to use religion as an excuse to restrict women’s medical decisions will likely be more widespread.

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A similar dark cloud looms over LGBTQ rights.

Although Trump said that *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a 2015 landmark case in which the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that same-sex couples have the constitutional right to marry, is “settled,” Religious Right groups believe otherwise, and some have already laid out plans to work with the Trump administration to try to reverse marriage equality.

On Nov. 9, the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), a Religious Right group, stated its intent to pressure Trump and his administration to work toward winning a court reversal of *Obergefell* and revoking an Obama administration federal guidance that protects transgender public school students from discrimination.

Anti-transgender rights policies and Supreme Court appointees will affect pending transgender rights cases.

The Supreme Court is set to hear its first case dealing with transgender rights, *Gloucester County School Board v. G.G.*, which the American Civil Liberties Union filed on behalf of high school student Gavin Grimm. Grimm is suing his public school in Virginia, seeking the right to use the bathroom that aligns with his gender identity. (See “A Grimm Struggle,” page 4.)

NOM also said it wants to help the Trump administration pass FADA.

Even if Senate Democrats use the filibuster to block extreme Trump proposals, there are things he can do unilaterally. He can repeal Obama executive orders that protect LGBTQ Americans and order the U.S. Justice Department to take stands against the separation of church and state in cases pending before the Supreme Court and lower courts. He can also use the bully pulpit to promote the Religious Right’s pet causes.

The Trump presidency and the new Congress will definitely be a challenge, but Americans United is ready to engage. AU will oppose Trump’s plans to repeal the Johnson Amendment, as well as his schemes to restrict LGBTQ, religious minorities’ and women’s rights. Americans United will also work against any plan to send taxpayer dollars to private religious schools through vouchers.

“Religious freedom is far too valuable for us to lose and far too fragile for us to leave unguarded,” Lynn said in a post-election statement. “Americans United stands at the ready to fight back against any and all of Trump’s dangerous initiatives.”

SECULAR COLORADO

Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Sunday, January 22

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

12:00 PM (BA) Monthly Membership Meeting, at the Boulder Public Library

2:15 PM (BA) Lunch at the Med on Walnut

Monday, January 23

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, January 24

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

Thursday, January 26

12:30 PM (BA) Weekly Lunch Social at 3 Margaritas, 28th and Iris, Boulder

4:00 PM (BA) Afternoon Coffee at Red Rock Coffeehouse, Boulder

6:30 PM (Hub) Movie Night: TBD at 7 on the big screen at the Hub

Friday, January 27

7:00 PM (BA) Dinner in Lafayette

Saturday, January 28

9:30 AM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

More Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Sunday, January 29

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

Monday, January 30

5:30 PM (Hub) Social Hour Southeast, at Darcy's Pub and Bistro

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, January 31

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

Wednesday, February 1

7:00 PM (Hub) Biweekly Meditation Meetup

Thursday, February 2

12:30 PM (BA) Weekly Lunch Social at 3 Margaritas, 28th and Iris, Boulder

4:00 PM (BA) Afternoon Coffee at Red Rock Coffeehouse, Boulder

6:30 PM (Hub) Movie Night: TBD at 7 on the big screen at the Hub

Saturday, February 4

9:30 AM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

SECULAR COLORADO

More Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Sunday, February 5

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

10:00 AM (SA) Pancake Breakfast at the Hub, sponsored by Sunday Assembly

Monday, February 6

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, February 7

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

5:30 PM (Hub) Newbie Night

7:00 PM (BA) Monthly Evening Social at Murphy's

Thursday, February 9

12:30 PM (BA) Weekly Lunch Social at 3 Margaritas, 28th and Iris, Boulder

4:00 PM (BA) Afternoon Coffee at Red Rock Coffeehouse, Boulder

6:30 PM (Hub) Movie Night: TBD at 7 on the big screen at the Hub

More Events

[Details in Online Calendar](#)

Saturday, February 11

9:30 AM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

10:30 AM (Hub) Sports of Nature Hike at Dinosaur Ridge Trail

11:00 AM (Hub) S.N.A.P (Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests), at the Hub

Sunday, February 12

10:00 AM (Hub) Coffee and Community

11:30 A.M. (Hub) SVC Meeting: Secular Volunteers Serving the Community

6:30 PM (Hub) Darwin Day: Jeff Mitton on "What Darwin got Wrong, A Look At A Book By Jerry Fodor"

Monday, February 13

6:30 PM (Hub) Freethinkers in AA

Tuesday, February 14

10:30 AM (Hub) Work/Study at the Hub

Wednesday, February 15

7:00 PM (Hub) Biweekly Meditation Meetup

SECULAR CONTACTS

This page contains contact information for the groups collaborating on this newsletter.

Secular Hub

Website: <http://www.secularhub.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/SecularHub/>

Humanists of Colorado

Website: <http://humanistsofcolorado.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/humanism-160>

Boulder Atheists

Website: <http://www.boulderatheists.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Boulder-Atheists/>

Freedom From Religion Foundation

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/FFRF-Denver/>

Sunday Assembly

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Denver/>

Secular Volunteer Corps

(Organized by the Secular Hub)

Americans United

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Americans-United-for-Separation-of-Church-State-Colorado/>

Jefferson Humanists

Website: <http://jeffersonhumanists.org>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/jeffcohumanists>

Newsletter Inquiries:

Send articles for consideration, letters to the editor, or inquiries to:

info@humanistsofcolorado.org