



THE

HUMANIST SOCIETY

OF NEW MEXICO

NEWSLETTER

June 2018

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

hs-nm.org

president@humanistsocietyofnm.org

www.meetup.com/group-HSNM/

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque

HSNM meetings are free and open to the public (unless otherwise noted.)

Saturday, June 9

HSNM Informal Meeting 10am to Noon
Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, June 16

HSNM Topical Discussion 10am – Noon
Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE
What are the Proper Goals of Education?

Saturday, June 23

HSNM Speaker Meeting 10am – Noon
Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE
The American Ethical Union's 103rd Assembly

Randall Wall and HSNM Members

Meetings by HSNM Affiliates are held throughout the month.
For more information please visit their websites.

Albuquerque Skeptics

(www.meetup.com/ABQSkeptics)

Freedom From Religion, Albuquerque

(www.meetup.com/FFRABQ)

New Mexicans for Science and Reason (www.nmsr.org)

Roswatheists (<http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists>)

Santa Fe Atheist Community

(<http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Atheist-Community>)

President's Message

by Randall Wall

If you've ever tried to write something, you know how hard it is. To do it well, that's even harder. Zelda Gatuskin knows how to write well and was on hand to share with us how she does it! She describes writing as a way of thinking. To illustrate this idea she took the audience members through a series of writing exercises that showed how the act of writing really is the very act of thinking as well. It was amazing and the group enjoyed the talk and also what they were able to take away from it to improve their own writing. Thank you Zelda for a wonderful program!!

This month, I'm anxiously awaiting to attend the American Ethical Union's 103rd Assembly being held here in Albuquerque (for details, see last month's issue)! The primary theme of the assembly is environmental justice, and several excellent sessions are on offer! One of them consists of myself and other freethought leaders from our area telling you about what each of our organizations are about and how to build a greater freethought community. I hope you'll come join us!

The link is <https://aeu.org/event/aeu-103rd-assembly/>

The Humanist Society of New Mexico

A Nonprofit Corporation

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

Member of The New Mexico Coalition of Reason

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

Officer/Committees

Randall Wall: President

David Stelle: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Cynthianne Yabut: Secretary

Richard Grady: Treasurer

Cheryl Gatner: Member-at-Large

Jeanette Smith: Member-at-Large

A subscription to the HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM Membership, or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$20 annually. HSNM membership is \$20/year (\$30 for two adults in the same household). Youth/student membership (24 years or under) is \$5.00 per year.

Send subscription or membership requests to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293.

To join or renew membership on line, go to the website at <http://humanistic/join.html>.

HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues. Visit www.americanhumanist.org for more information about the American Humanist Association.

Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, Paragon2012@comcast.net. Send Website submissions to president@humanistsocietyofnm.org. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Friday of each month.

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

Next Speaker Meeting

For this event, we'll be recapping the events of the American Ethical Union 103rd Assembly mentioned above. I'll go back and give you some background on AEU and what that's about and then I and other attendees will discuss the topics that were the subject of those presentations. Then, to round that out, we'll discuss some of the similarities and differences in our organization and AEU's. If I know HSNM, a lively discussion is bound to break out and that's the way we like it!

Come to a Backyard Picnic/ Potluck at Charlene and Allen's!

When: Saturday, June 30 at 6 pm

Where: Loretta Drive near Coors and Alameda Blvd NW.

Please call Charlene at 505-350-2436 for directions and to let her know you are coming. There will be lemonade, iced tea and wine. Bring what you wish for drinks and food to share. Bring a favorite joke/shaggy dog story/limerick or party game.

Group That Opposes Contraception Cheers Trump Giving It Access To Family Planning Funds

RightWingWatch.org

A Project from People for the American Way

President Trump is expected to reveal more details about his administration's plans to further restrict the use of federal planning funds when he speaks to an anti-choice Susan B. Anthony List gala tonight. Religious Right groups that are intent on destroying Planned Parenthood have pushed for, and are celebrating, the Trump administration's plans to deny family planning funds to groups that perform abortions.

On Monday, the Catholic Medical Association celebrated the fact that under the expected changes to Department of Health and Human Services, it and other faith-based organizations will be eligible to receive Title X Family Planning grant money even though the groups oppose contraception.

“We at the CMA have been talking with the White House about this obstacle which prevented us from accessing the funding and have been strongly urging the administration to make funds available for abstinence and natural family programs,” said CMA President Peter Morrow in a press release. “Now that the abortion and contraception referral is gone we are now finally eligible and applying.”

The CMA, which grew out a Catholic physicians group that in the 1960s opposed “socialized medicine” in the form of Medicare and Medicaid, represents doctors and other medical professionals that have declared “steadfast fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church.” A 2010 brochure called “Homosexuality and Hope” declares that same-sex attraction is “preventable and treatable.”

It is not yet clear just how far the administration’s new regulations will go to deny funds to groups that even provide women with information about or referrals for abortion, in effect imposing a domestic version of the international gag rule that the Trump administration has imposed and expanded, threatening the health of women around the world.

Americans United And Allies Say U.S. House Of Representatives Must Allow Nonbelievers As Guest Chaplains

www.au.org

Press Release from Americans United for the Separation of Church and State

Americans United for Separation of Church and State, joined by 12 religious and civil-rights organizations, today explained to a federal appeals court why the U.S. House of Representatives must allow nontheistic guest chaplains to offer secular invocations.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed in the lawsuit *Barker v. Conroy*, Americans United and allies detail how the House chaplain’s requirements for guest chaplains – that they be clergy ordained by a recognized religious body, that they continue to practice that body’s religion and that they will invoke a divine higher power – are unconstitutional because they exclude nonbelievers from participating, entangle government in individuals’ personal beliefs and show government favoritism for theistic religions over nontheistic ones and religion over nonreligion.

“The U.S. House of Representatives’ practice of having overwhelmingly Christian and monotheistic invocations does not reflect the religious pluralism of today’s America,” said Rachel Laser, Americans United’s president and CEO. “Members of the House relate to God in many ways, and a growing percentage of Americans do not relate to a deity at all. The chaplains offering invocations to the House should reflect this religious diversity.”

As further evidence of the changing attitudes about religion and government, Laser pointed to the recent controversy surrounding the employment and potential replacement of House Chaplain the Rev. Patrick Conroy, as well as the establishment of the Congressional Freethought Caucus. This new caucus, according to co-founder Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.), is intended to “help spark an open dialogue about science and reason-based policy solutions, and the importance of defending the secular character of our government.”

“Tradition cannot justify the House’s discriminatory practice, for our constitutional tradition abhors religious discrimination.” Laser said. “It’s time for the House to embrace inclusivity by welcoming chaplains, members of Congress and citizens of all beliefs.”

Americans United and allies urged the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia to reverse a lower court’s ruling and reinstate the case, which was filed on behalf of Dan Barker, an atheist, ordained Christian minister

and co-founder of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, whose request to offer a House invocation was denied.

“The Constitution prohibits the House Chaplain – just like all other governmental officials – from discriminating based on religion,” the brief explains. “It is no more constitutionally permissible to exclude the one-tenth of Americans who are nontheists from eligibility to solemnize sessions of Congress than it would be to exclude Jews, Muslims, Hindus, or Sikhs from the guest chaplaincy based on disapproval of their beliefs.”

“No one should be excluded from participating in civic affairs because they do not believe in God,” said AU Associate Legal Director Alex J. Luchenitser, one of the brief’s authors. “Singling out nonbelievers and preventing them from offering inspirational words to their representatives is religious discrimination, plain and simple.”

Joining Americans United on the brief are the American Ethical Union, Anti-Defamation League, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Interfaith Alliance Foundation, Jewish Social Policy Action Network, Men of Reform Judaism, National Council of Jewish Women, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Sikh Coalition, Union for Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association and Women of Reform Judaism.

In addition to Luchenitser, the brief was authored by AU Legal Director Richard B. Katskee and Legal Fellow Claire L. Hillan.

Judge Rules in Favor of Humanist Group in Case Challenging Prayer Vigil Led by Florida City Officials

www.americanhumanist.org

(Washington, D.C., May. 25, 2018)— Late afternoon yesterday, Judge Timothy J. Corrigan ruled in favor of the American Humanist Association in its case against the City of Ocala for an unconstitutional prayer vigil led by city officials in September 2014.

“In sum, under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the government cannot initiate, organize, sponsor, or conduct a community prayer vigil,” explained Judge Corrigan. “That is what happened here.”

In September 2016, the American Humanist Association’s Legal Center filed for summary judgment in its lawsuit challenging the City of Ocala’s actions in promoting a prayer vigil led by its police department. During the vigil, uniformed police personnel led and participated in religious activities with the approval of the mayor and police chief.

The prayer vigil, which was held in September 2014, was promoted by a letter on police department letterhead signed by the police chief and posted on the city’s social media. The chief’s letter urged citizens to attend the vigil, saying the city’s crime problem “requires fervent prayer.” The prayer vigil featured uniformed Ocala police personnel leading prayers, as well as other Christian speakers and evangelical call-and-response prayers and chanting. The city’s mayor and uniformed police officers wearing badges attended the vigil in their official capacities. Local citizens objected to the city’s unconstitutional actions, but the mayor and police chief ignored their concerns.

“Police departments shouldn’t be endorsing religion, yet that’s exactly what the Ocala Police Department did here by sponsoring and promoting a prayer vigil,” said David Niose, AHA legal director. “We hope this ruling ensures that prayer rallies in the future will be run by churches, not police departments.

Member’s Corner

Reminder: the first 15 minutes of the informal meeting (June 9 this month) is dedicated to open discussion of HSNM business. If you want to make suggestions or comments (or even complain), this is the place!