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The ERA: Forward to Fruition January Public Meeting

Betty Folliard, Founder of ERA Minnesota, will give a presentation on the history of the Equal Rights Amendment and why it is so needed today. She will outline arguments for and against the ERA and provide up-to-the-moment progress on both the federal ERA and the Minnesota State ERA Ballot Initiative that passed the Minnesota Senate 43-23 in 2023 and which will be up for final consideration when the Minnesota Legislative Session reconvenes in February 2024. The Minnesota State ERA Ballot Initiative would put the question to the voters as to whether our Minnesota State Constitution would be amended to include a state ERA.



ERA Minnesota is also pleased to announce a public ERA rally in the Minnesota Capitol Rotunda on the first day of session, Monday, February 12th, 2024, 10 a.m.–noon. Supporters are invited to show up and help lift the ERA over the finish line in 2024.

Visit the ERA Minnesota website at <https://eramn.org> and subscribe to their mailing list at <https://eramn.org/subscribe>. Consider becoming a member. (Their membership funds are used for 501(c)4 activities and are not tax deductible.)

Sunday, January 21, 2024

1:00–1:15 p.m.: Social
1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting
1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break, Presenter
Set-Up, Social Time
2:00–3:30 p.m.: Program
3:30–4:00 p.m.: Social Time
4:00 p.m.: Leave for dinner

Dinner:
Los Ocampo
615 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55103
(kitty-corner from the library)
<https://www.losocampo.com>

Rondo Community Library
461 Dale St N
St Paul, MN 55104
(There is free underground parking off of University Ave.)

Online:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82344512218?pwd=VWNDclk2b-VUxeWJdTnAzU3BhQnNRdz09>

Or call in:
+13092053325,,82344512218#,,, *6
76832#

Happy New Year 2024!

Six Things to Add to Your Resolutions

By *Milo Grika*

1. **Be more giving** — like giving to Minnesota Atheists!
2. **Be more skeptical** — especially of your own biases
3. **Be more patient** — believers have a reason for their belief; understanding it, is the first step to arguing against it
4. **Be more open** — being the face of non-belief helps others to “come out”
5. **Be more vocal** — if you see a church/state infraction, tell someone (especially the FFRF: <https://ffrf.org/legal/report/>)
6. **Be more humorous** — seriously, lighten up and just ignore this list (but seriously, try to give a little more)



Cryptogram

By *George Francis Kane*

Ltt fitxexvcr kcxqiy gxqu evaifchicq lfi hvfi vf tirr
xcxhxbлт qv txnifqd. Ltt rizlflqiy jfvh evaifchicq lfi
bvhzlqxnti gxqu txnifqd.

Uicfd Btld, xc l rziibu qv qui Uvkri vj

Fizfircqlqxair.



News and Notes

Make America Facist Again

By *George Francis Kane*

Project 2025 is an ambitious plan to transform the government of the United States — and then the nation itself — into

an instrument of conservative dominion, to be launched upon the election of a Republican president in 2024. The germinal concept underlying the plan is that the great obstacle that has thwarted conservative presidents thus far is the bureaucracy of career government workers operating powerful regulatory agencies. Project 2025 plans to undermine this opposition by implementing unitary executive theory, which holds that every agency of the executive branch of government is constitutionally under the direct authority and control of the president. This idea surfaced repeatedly during the administration of George W. Bush in the tidal wave of signing statements that he attached to new laws.

To implement an operational takeover, Project 2025 proposes the wholesale replacement of government personnel. Less than a month before the 2020 election, President Trump issued the Schedule F Executive Order, which changed the employment status of thousands of civil service employees from competitive to at-will. This order states that “the President and his appointees must rely on men and women in the Federal service employed in positions of a confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character. Faithful execution of the law requires that the President have appropriate management oversight regarding this select cadre of professionals.” President Biden rescinded this executive order early in his presidency, but Project 2025 calls for immediately reinstating it. This will open about fifty thousand federal

agency jobs to executive appointments. Project 2025 is already compiling a personnel database for this, providing application forms designed to identify the strongest and most doctrinaire MAGA loyalists.

At first glance, this is not the sort of political question on which Minnesota Atheists would take a position. Our political identity arises from the religion clauses of the First Amendment, and civil service job protections seem remote to this narrow interest. Atheists, however, should be very afraid of Project 2025.

From the years of the Earl Warren Court, Republicans spoke of their plan to seize ideological control of what then seemed to be a hopelessly liberal Supreme Court. That quest appeared to be commonplace political planning, but now that the plan has reached fruition, we can see that it has transformed the Free Exercise Clause into an inexhaustible font of religious privilege, and the Establishment Clause into vacuous prattle.

The 2025 presidential transition plan calls for the immediate takeover of every federal agency with an army of “weaponized conservatives ready on day one to do battle against the deep state.” The Christian nationalist precepts that the Supreme Court has implemented will be applied with passion by these agencies.

For example, the religionist hope for the Department of Education is to channel federal subsidies to the states away from public education and into church schools. The Supreme Court has ruled that if the state provides vouchers for private schools, then church schools cannot be excluded from the program.

Social Service agencies will try whenever possible to hand their functions over to Christian charities. Project 2025 calls for the Department of Health and Human Services to adopt a “biblically based” definition of “marriage and family.” Family-based policies will include eliminating abortion and outlawing “pornography,” which will be interpreted to include any mention of LGBTQ rights.

Even the Justice Department may promote

Project 2025

PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION PROJECT

Continued on page 4

Freethought Toastmasters Club

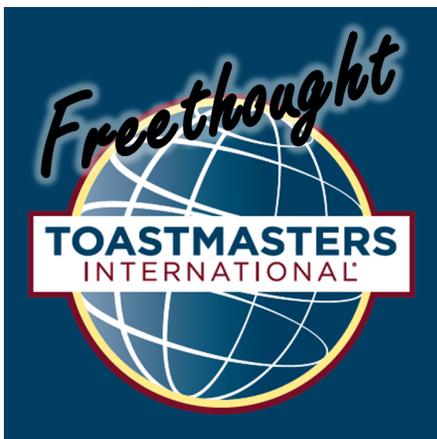
By Bob Maline

Freethought Toastmasters club met January 1 as it does every first and third Monday each month. Two prepared speeches were presented: One new member described a personal obstacle he overcame as a young man and an experienced member reported on former president Trump's plans to gut the professional civil service with Project 2025 if he is re-elected. As a community based club, rather than a corporate club, loosely affiliated with Minnesota Atheists, Freethought's speech topics are sometimes more personal and potentially controversial than would fit the culture of many corporate clubs.

A highlight for many members was choosing one of the speech topics for a round robin discussion. At this meeting, they chose the threat of Christian Nationalism for discussion extending the topic of the Project 2025 speech. Each person got up to 1 minute in the first rotation, 2 minutes in the second rotation, and 1 minute in the third. This method ensured everyone got to speak and no one dominated the discussion. And, of course, a few people passed on their time as they'd said all they'd wanted to say.

Some members commented that this was the best and most important round robin discussion since a discussion of abortion many months prior. Not every speech or discussion is such a heavy topic, but Freethought Toastmasters club is one of the few places a discussion like this can be had in such a fair and open manner.

For more information contact Bob Maline at rjmaline@gmail.com or find Freethought Toastmasters in the MN Atheists Meetup feed <https://www.meetup.com/minnesotaatheists/> and just show up.



Treasury Report

July–October 2023

By Chris Matthews

General/Visibility Fund Donations

\$200 George Kane
\$200 Ross Meisner
\$176 Stephanie Zvan
\$90 Michelle Tjernagel
\$50 Rachel Wilson
\$40 Ben Zvan
\$78 Cash, Fifth Sunday
\$25 PayPal Giving Fund
\$859 Subtotal

Building Fund Donations

\$0 Subtotal

Atheists Talk (Radio Fund) Donations

\$0 Subtotal

\$859 Total Donations

Expenses

\$116 IT, General Exp
\$110 Telephone
\$100 Speakers
\$184 Misc
\$510 Total Expenses

Current Building Fund — \$152,226

Project 2025 continued from page 3

Christianity. For example, the Bureau of Prisons could approve Christian programs for inmates, while denying them access to anti-religious materials.

The grasp of Project 2025 is too great for any single organization, so it has enlisted the support of well-funded conservative groups with impressive track records in culture wars. The Heritage Foundation, the Alliance Defending Freedom, the American Family Association, the American Legislative Exchange Council, and the Family Research Council are among over 70 organizations on its advisory board.

The conservative reconstitution of the Supreme Court has been a disaster for the separation of state and church. Project 2025 may now topple Jefferson's Wall for generations.

Board Nominations

Minnesota Atheists holds elections for the Board of Directors every year. The board of directors consists of:

- President
- Associate president
- Chair
- Associate chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Three directors-at-large

All positions are up for election. If you are interested or would like to know more about a board position, please contact chair@mnatheists.org or any board member.

Nominations will open and close during the January Business Meeting starting at 1:15 p.m.

Opinion

Ayaan Hirsi Ali's Conversion

By August Berkshire

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, former Muslim, former atheist, is now calling herself a Christian. (<https://unherd.com/2023/11/why-i-am-now-a-christian>)

Her critique of radical Islam is accurate. She was brutalized when she was young by Islam (female genital mutilation, among other things). Then, for over ten years in America, she has had to live with the fear of being killed by Muslim extremists. She even had to have bodyguards. This takes an emotional toll on a person.

So she turned to atheism, which she found philosophically justifiable, but it evidently did not give her the emotional support she was looking for. She doesn't mention secular humanist groups, which might have provided that. She also appears to have bought into the religious lie that god-belief is necessary for civilization and to live an ethical life. She also claims "Unlike Islam, Christianity outgrew its dogmatic stage." Is she unaware of the Christian Nationalist movement?

In the end, she appears to have turned to

Candidates need to be nominated by another dues-paying member while nominations are open. The nominee does not need to be present to be nominated.

To be eligible for office, the nominee must have been a dues-paying member for at least one year prior to the date of assuming office (March 1). Director-at-large nominees must have been a member for six months prior instead of one year. If you're interested in being on the board but do not meet these qualifications, consider getting your dues in now so you may qualify next year!

The elections will take place during the February Business Meeting starting at 1:15 p.m. This will also be a Zoom meeting. The new board will take office on March 1.

Christianity for emotional reasons. I say this because nowhere does she offer any evidence for anything supernatural. She also thinks Christianity is the best way to counter radical Islam, evidently not realizing that when most people leave their religion they go to agnosticism or atheism, not another religion — because the same critiques that can be used against the supernatural beliefs of one religion can be used against all of them.

Christianity is dying in America, but it still has enough clout to stop its logical replacement: secular humanism. So we are in a confusing middle ground for some people. The plight of Ayaan Hirsi Ali reminds me a lot of that of Sinead O'Conner. She has my sympathy.



Ayaan Hirsi Ali speaking at CPAC 2016 in National Harbor, Maryland.

Photo by: [Gage Skidmore](#)

Upcoming Monthly Events

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

Hybrid Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Email chair@mnatheists.org for the meeting link.

Freethinking Females

Online 2nd Monday of every month at 7 p.m.

In Person Last Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m., Sweeney’s Saloon, 96 North Dale Street, St. Paul.

Shattering the myth that atheist groups are male dominated with a females-only event.

Online Blasphemer’s Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m.

Bowling for Deities Last Saturday of every month at noon,
(usually) at Flaherty’s Arden Bowl, 1273 West County Road E, Arden Hills

In-person Trivia Night Every Sunday from 5:30–8 p.m.

Venn Brewing, 3550 E 46th St
Suite 140, Minneapolis

Online M.A.S.H! (MN Atheists Social Hour!) Every Tuesday (**note the day change**) from 5:30–6:30 p.m.

RSVP in Meetup and a Zoom link appears in the announcement.

Online In Depth – Discussion and Debate Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 3–4 p.m.

For more events and instructions for connecting to online events, visit:

www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists 



The “Nones” That You Know

Jack London

By *Milo Grika*

John Griffith Chaney (January 12, 1876 – November 22, 1916), better known as Jack London, was an American novelist, journalist and activist. Best known for *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*.

“I believe that when I am dead, I am dead. I believe that with my death I am just as much obliterated as the last mosquito you and I squashed.”
 – Jack London

Cryptogram Answer

All religions united with government are more or less inimical to liberty. All separated from government are compatible with liberty.

Henry Clay, in a speech to the House of Representatives.

Get Famous (Sort of)

You too can become published by simply submitting something to The Minnesota Atheist newsletter.

Just send your input to editor@mnatheists.org and we’ll do the rest.

Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

Membership Levels

- Student membership *Free*
- 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 \$ _____

Atheists Talk Fund \$ _____

I would like my donation(s) to be

- private
- public
- attributed by my name only

for reporting in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter and on the website. (By default, each donation will be considered private.)

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

Just email newsletter Email address _____

(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

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. Student memberships do not have voting rights and are not able to run for the board.

All paid 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:

Minnesota Atheists.

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

Minnesota Atheists
 PO Box 120304
 New Brighton, MN 55112

8 The Minnesota Atheist

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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NOTE: The numbers for “Regular memberships” and “Life members” are now based on financial data. These membership numbers undercount actual members, since one household membership could represent more than one member. Future numbers reported in the newsletter will continue to be based on financial data.

Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

Atheist Alliance of America
Atheist Alliance International
American Atheists
The American Humanist Association
Council for Secular Humanism
The International Humanist and Ethical Union
Secular Coalition for America

Minnesota Atheists Membership (as of Jan. 4, 2024)

Regular memberships: 52
Life members: 55
Meetup subscribers: 4,089

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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Published by Minnesota Atheists

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