

September/October
2024
Volume 34
Number 5

“Standing Up to Project 2025 and Other Threats to Democracy”

September Public Meeting

NOTE: October Public Meeting, page 4

Hemant Mehta

In September, we will forego our usual third Sunday meeting to join with our colleagues HumanistsMN to welcome Hemant Mehta, founder and editor of The Friendly Atheist.

The stakes are high in the November elections, with Christian Nationalism on the ballot in races nationwide. Hemant will discuss why it is important for secular voters to mobilize to fight growing threats to democracy, including Project 2025.

Please stick around after the formal program for a special Reception at 4:30 p.m. in the downstairs level. We’ll serve appetizers and drinks and you’ll get a chance to talk to our speaker and other guests.

Project 2025 is an authoritarian blueprint for a right wing administration that is infused with Christian Nationalist ideas. Hemant will tell us more about that plan, while examining the growing role that secular Americans



Photo by: [Hemant Mehta](#)

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Saturday, September 21, 2024

3:00–4:30 p.m.: Presentation

4:30– : Reception

First Unitarian Society of
Minneapolis
900 Mt Curve Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55403

(This is in a residential area. Pay attention to parking signs that may restrict where and for how long you can park. There is also paid parking at the nearby Walker Art Center garage.)

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are playing in today's politics — and what more they could be doing. He will tell us what to expect in the upcoming elections and what demands we can reasonably make.

The Friendly Atheist publishes commentary about religion and politics, centered on atheism. Hemant is also a YouTube creator and podcast co-host. He is a former National Board Certified math teacher in the suburbs of Chicago and continues to coach a nationally competitive public speaking team.

Author of multiple books, including "I Sold My Soul on Ebay," Hemant also publishes crossword puzzles for the New York Times and Slate, and was a Jeopardy! champion.

We will be in the Upper Assembly Hall on the main (third) floor. Street parking available at both entrances — Mt. Curve entrance (third floor) or Groveland Terrace entrance (first floor — take elevator down the hall to your right up to third floor).

This is in a residential area. Pay attention to parking signs that may restrict where and for how long you can park. There is also paid parking at the nearby Walker Art Center garage.

Cryptogram

By George Francis Kane

Okb rwurfvb fs vbrxuxotfc fs jkwujk xce voxob tv
of lbbr sfubabu sufp okbvb vkfubv okb jbxvbnbv
voutsb okxo kxv vfxlbe okb vftn fs Bwufrb tc inffe
sfu jbcowutbv.

Hxpbv Pxetvfc, tc x nboobu fihbjotcy of okb wvb fs
yfabucpbco nxce sfu jkwujkbv.



News and Notes Threats of Theocracy

By *George Francis Kane*

Early this year, an AP poll reported that 67 percent of likely voters believe that the outcome of the presidential election will

be very important for the future of democracy. Voters were fearful for democracy regardless of their political affiliation. Republicans and Democrats alike believe that our democratic form of government could be doomed if the other party wins the presidential election, although their reasons are different. More than 60% of Republicans believe that the 2020 election was stolen, while Democrats believe that Republicans are trying to suppress the racial minority vote.

I am not going to both-sides this issue, as the integrity of the vote in the 2024 election has been thoroughly investigated and verified. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Minnesota Atheists is not permitted to advocate for candidates in elections. We are allowed to advocate for issues in support of our expressive mission, but democracy is not generally considered to be an atheist issue. A person can be a consistent atheist and support republican democracy, a fascist dictatorship or even a monarchy. But, looking concretely at the plans of the political campaigns, it is clear that democracy will be critical in the battle over the separation of state and church.

Atheists are politically defined by their commitment to secular government. The greatest threat to secular government at the present time is posed by Christian nationalism. The United States is such a religiously diverse nation that most Americans will realize that government defining this narrow form of conservative Christianity as a national religious orthodoxy would violate their own religious freedom. That is why democracy is the strongest defense against attempts to impose religious dogma in laws. Secular government protects the religious liberty of most Americans from evangelizing by Christian nationalists, who are following a game plan to undermine democracy that is expounded in Proj-

ect 2025.

Presidential candidate Donald Trump has repeatedly made an ominous promise when courting Christian voters to dispense with democracy. Here's exactly what Trump says to Christian audiences on the campaign trail:

I don't care how, but you have to get out and vote. And again Christians, get out and vote, just this time. You won't have to do it anymore. Four more years you know what, it'll be fixed, it'll be fine. (Y)ou gotta get out and vote. In four years, you don't have to vote again, we'll have it fixed so good you're not going to have to vote.

Analysts leapt to differing interpretations of Trump's meaning here. Probably no other presidential candidate ever made this promise before! To secularists it sounds as if he is assuring supporters that if he is elected, he will manipulate future elections so that the vote count will not matter. Supporters interpreted his promise to be that his MAGA program will be so successful that it will unify the nation, so there will be no serious

challenges in future elections. When Laura Ingram asked him a few days later to clarify his mean-

ing, he just doubled down, leaving the mystery unresolved. Probably he intended both these meanings, and more. His goal was just to attract attention to the outlandish claim, while allowing himself wiggle room to deny any inferred intent.

Secular voters are concentrated in cities, while conservative Christians predominate in sparsely populated rural areas. A new electoral strategy among Christian nationalists is to base the result of statewide elections not on the popular vote, but instead on winning the majority of counties. In states like Texas this would almost ensure a Republican governor in perpetuity, no matter how great a majority of votes the Democratic candidate receives.

Democracy may not be an "atheist issue," but it is an important secular value. The consequences of actions in the quality of peoples' lives are the only non-theistic basis for objectivity in ethics. Ethical evaluation of government actions must take into account their effects on all of the people. The only way to get everyone's input into government decisions is through some form of democracy.

“Reproductive Rights on the Ballot” October Public Meeting

Georgia Hancock

In its 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that women no longer have a constitutional right to an abortion. Instead, states were free to decide how much or how little freedom women would have to control their own bodies. Since then we have seen ballot initiatives and new laws in several states across the country, with more planned for this November.

At our October public meeting, Georgia Hancock will discuss the recent history and upcoming legal battles regarding the reproductive rights of abortion, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and contraception.

Georgia Hancock is a long time member of Minnesota Atheists and our Public Policy Committee, where she specializes in the area of reproductive rights.



Sunday, October 20, 2024

1:00 p.m.: Library and Underground Parking open. Zoom starts.

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 p.m.: Leave for dinner

October 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=VWNDclk2bVUxeWJDtnAzU3BhQnNRdz09>

Or call in:

+13092053325,,82344512218#,,, *676832#

MN Atheist Philanthropy Pad Project

By *Nancy Hertz and Caroline Brunner*

At the Pad Project events we make washable, re-useable maxi pads for girls and women in impoverished areas around the world. These durable and long-lasting maxi pad kits consist of two waterproof base units, four heavy liners and four light liners. They can be washed and re-used many times. They can last up to three years. The pads are sent to young girls who cannot attend school during their periods due to not having access to menstrual pads.

What makes this situation even more alarming is that high school boys and men in their area are buying disposable pads and giving them to the girls in exchange for sex. The sad situation that many of these young girls find themselves in is having to choose between dropping out of school or having to prostitute themselves in order to graduate. In Kenya, graduating from high school is often the difference between having a career and a bright future, or going hungry.

After we make the pads they are sent to The Pad Project to be distributed to where they are needed.

We have been making pads every quarter for one year. We have made and shipped out

153 sets of pads. That means 153 young girls are able to attend school every day. We also have many pads in various stages of being done.

At each event we cut material, put the pads together to be sewn, turn the pads in side out, apply snaps and put them together for shipping. We need people both with and without sewing experience. After working on the pads we order pizza and take time to socialize and relax.

Many thanks to the MNA board for helping with expenses!

If you are interested in helping out please sign up on Meetup.

**the
pad
project.**

Treasury Report

April–June, 2024

By *Chris Matthews*

General/Visibility Fund Donations

\$150 Ross Meisner
\$70 Michelle Tjernagel
\$50 Daniel Lauseng
\$20 Ben Zvan
\$67 PayPal Giving Fund
\$117 Cash donations
\$474 Subtotal

\$474 Total Donations

Expenses

\$1,834 Newsletters
\$969 T-Shirts
\$400 Donations to Organizations
\$294 IT, General
\$253 Parade / Booth
\$379 Misc
\$4,129 Total Expenses

Current Building Fund – \$157,846

In Memoriam Don Allan

By *Bonnie Ploger,
Wife of Don Allan*

I am sad to inform you that my loving husband Don Allan died in my arms on July 4th. The Minnesota Atheists was an important part of our lives before Don got dementia, which stole his intellect but not his love and ability to recognize me and others he knew. To learn more about Don's life, please [read his obituary](#).

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.

In Person Blasphemer’s Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m., Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield

In Person 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

Ursula K. Le Guin

By *Milo Grika*

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin (October 21, 1929 – January 22, 2018) was an American author. She is best known for her science fiction works set in her Hainish universe, and the Earthsea fantasy series.

“I talk about the gods, I am an atheist. But I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin

Cryptogram Answer

The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries.

James Madison, in a letter objecting to the use of government land for churches.

Get Famous (Sort of)

Send submissions to The Minnesota Atheist newsletter. Just email 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

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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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NOTE: The numbers for “Regular memberships” and “Life members” are based on financial data. These membership numbers undercount actual members, since one household or sustaining membership could represent more than one person.

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 Dec. 31, 2023)
Regular memberships: 67
Life members: 53
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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