



Humanists Hawaii

NEWSLETTER

January 2007

January meeting at Krauss Hall

A discussion of

Participatory Economics

led by Jim Lomont

January 28, 2007

10:30 a.m.

Krauss Hall 112

University of Hawaii

Although not a professional economist, HH member Jim Lomont has long been a student of economic policy. Of particular interest to him is the incorporation of humanistic democracy into a successful and sustainable economy. At the December meeting, Jim gave the members present copies of two papers to read in preparation for the January discussion.

"[Participatory Economics](#)" by Michael Albert outlines the principles and answers objections to the economy Albert is promoting. In "[Participatory Economics Interview](#)," Kate Redmond of radio station KFAI in Minneapolis interviews Michael Albert and clarifies some issues presented by the theory. These papers are available on the net or from Jim Lomont. If you'd like a set, click on the hyperlinks above or call Jim at 262-5108w or 234-1835.

A bit about Michael Albert

Michael Albert is a founder and current member of the staff of Z Magazine as well as System Operator of Z Magazine's web system: [ZNet](#).

Albert's activities have ranged from local, regional, and national organizing projects and campaigns to co-founding [South End Press](#), [Z Magazine](#), the [Z Media Institute](#), and [ZNet](#).

Albert has authored numerous books. Most recently these include: [Thinking Forward](#) (Arbeiter Ring Press), and [Looking Forward: Participatory Economics in the 21st Century](#) (South End Press) and [Political Economy of Participatory Economics](#) (Princeton University Press; both with Robin Hahnel).

Many of Albert's Z articles are stored in [ZNet](#) and can be accessed there along with hundreds of other Z Magazine articles essays, interviews, etc.

Humanists Hawaii has a new Secretary: Healani Mielke

Healani consented to fill the long-empty office of secretary at the December meeting and was promptly elected by acclamation. Healani has taken notes of our meetings for some time. Now she will officially record attendance, generally describe what happens and keep official minutes when necessary.

So on to the December meeting:

The purpose of the meeting was conversation on current affairs from a Humanist point of view. Michael Mueller suggested HH speak more publicly about US actions (or inactions) regarding Pinochet, torture, Saddam Hussein's hanging, etc. John Spangler observed that the major value in America is the accumulation of money. Michael said Humanist value the separation of state and church, but this is ignored

in the US. Healani asked how much the state makes from the various churches. Andi noted that municipalities lose a lot of revenue by not taxing church property and providing other tax breaks. This, she said, is not separation of church and state at all.

Ken Mesker wondered why anyone should bother to vote. John said people feel that way because 25% of the population elects the government in the US.

Future meetings:

February is going to be a bit busier than our usual month. Richard Dawkins will be speaking at the University of Hawaii February 20. And Hank Kocol is going to give a presentation on "The Manhattan Project." The March meeting is not solidified yet, but a visit to Coconut Island is a definite possibility.

Richard Dawkins to speak at UH-Manoa

Talk titled "Queerer Than We Can Suppose?: The Strangeness of Science"

To repeat the time from last HH Newsletter, Becky Goodman of [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#) tells us that Richard Dawkins is coming to UH next month. She says:

"YES! Richard Dawkins is visiting the [University of Hawaii, Manoa](#), and will present a public lecture titled: **Queerer Than We Can Suppose? The Strangeness of Science**, on Tuesday **February 20 at 7 pm** in the **Campus Center Ballroom**. The presentation is free and open to the public and is part of the [Distinguished Lecture Series](#). I suggest that people arrive at least 30 minutes early to get a good seat. It's sure to be a packed house."

Humanists are great fans of Dawkins, most recently because of his recent book, [The God Delusion](#).

The first holder of the newly endowed [Charles Simonyi Chair](#) in the Public Understanding of Science, and a Fellow of [New College, at the University of Oxford](#), Richard Dawkins first came to prominence with his 1976 book [The Selfish Gene](#), which popularized the [gene-centric view of evolution](#) and introduced the term [meme](#) into the lexicon, thereby helping to found the field of [memetics](#). In 1982, he made a major contribution to the science of evolution

with the theory, presented in his widely cited book [The Extended Phenotype](#), that [phenotypic effects](#) are not limited to an organism's body but can stretch far into the environment, including into the bodies of other organisms. He has since written [The Blind Watchmaker](#) (1986), [River Out of Eden](#) (1995), [Climbing Mount Improbable](#) (1996), [Unweaving the Rainbow](#) (1998), [A Devil's Chaplain](#) (2003), [The Ancestor's Tale](#) (2004), and [The God Delusion](#) (2006), and has appeared in numerous radio and television about [evolutionary biology](#), [creationism](#), and [religion](#).

Dawkins is an outspoken [atheist](#), [humanist](#), and [sceptic](#), and a prominent member of the [Brights movement](#). In a play on [Thomas Huxley's](#) epithet "Darwin's bulldog", Dawkins' impassioned defense of evolution has earned him the appellation "Darwin's rottweiler".

Dawkins will also conduct a seminar for members of the sponsoring departments: "Is Evolution Predictable?" (*still* no details available). His visit is Cosponsored by the [Department of Zoology](#) and the [Program in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology](#), University of Hawaii, Manoa.

American Health Insurance Explained

explained on the net via Terry Robinson

Rising health insurance costs and HMOs, I found an interesting (but, unfortunately, anonymous) question and answer dialogue about HMOs on the Internet the other day. Here are a few of the questions about HMOs and the answers provided.

Q. What does HMO stand for?

A. This is actually a variation of the phrase, "HEY MOE." Its roots go back to a concept pioneered by Larry, of the Three Stooges, who discovered that a patient could be made to forget the pain in his foot if he was poked hard enough in the eye.

Q. I just joined an HMO. How difficult will it be to choose the doctor I want?

A. Just slightly more difficult than choosing your parents. Your insurer will provide you with a book listing all the doctors in the plan. The doctors basically fall into two categories--those who are no longer accepting new patients, and those who will see you but are no longer participating in the plan. But don't worry, the remaining doctor who is still in the plan and accepting new patients has an office just a half-day's drive away and a diploma from a third world country.

Q. Do all diagnostic procedures require pre-certification?

A. No. Only those you need.

Q. Can I get coverage for my preexisting conditions?

A. Certainly, as long as they don't require any treatment.

Q. What happens if I want to try alternative forms of medicine?

A. You'll need to find alternative forms of payment.

Q. My pharmacy plan only covers generic drugs, but I need the name brand. I tried the generic medication, but it gave me a stomach ache. What should I do?

A. Poke yourself in the eye.

Q. What if I'm away from home and I get sick?

A. You really shouldn't do that.

Q. I think I need to see a specialist, but my doctor insists he can handle my problem. Can a general practitioner really perform a heart transplant right in his office?

A. Hard to say, but considering that all you're risking is the \$20 co-payment, there's no harm in giving it a shot.

Q. Will health care be different in the next century?

A. No, but if you call right now, you might get an appointment by then.

ACLU urges Congress to clean house

Calls on lawmakers to restore and protect civil liberties
American Civil Liberties Union

WASHINGTON – Top leaders of the American Civil Liberties Union today called on the newly installed 110th Congress to defend the fundamental freedoms of all Americans. In a letter sent to all members, the leaders also outlined the ACLU's legislative agenda.

"The ACLU is here to remind Congress that the American people voted for change," said Anthony D. Romero, ACLU Executive Director. "That change starts with standing up for the American people and defending the Constitution."

Romero and Caroline Fredrickson, Director of the ACLU Washington Legislative Office, alerted Congress to the organization's top priorities for the 110th Congress. Specifically, they are calling on lawmakers to:

- Restore *habeas corpus* and due process rights, which were gutted in the Military Commissions Act,
- Investigate and stop the warrantless NSA surveillance program,
- Take steps to better protect the privacy of all Americans,
- Investigate and stop the administration's policies of torture, abuse and rendition, and
- Curb overuse of the state secrets privilege and Sensitive Security Information classification.

In addition, the ACLU will also continue to work on racial profiling, lesbian and gay rights, immigration, the Real ID Act, reproductive rights and protecting the First Amendment, among other important civil liberties issues.

The ACLU is optimistic that the new Congress will provide better oversight into the actions of the Bush administration and enact legislation that protects freedom and privacy. However, Fredrickson noted, the organization will continue to aggressively lobby lawmakers to ensure that anti-civil liberties measures are not adopted.

"We urge the new Congress to shine sunlight onto this administration when it acts to take away our basic freedoms," said Fredrickson. "The American people can be both safe and free."

To read the ACLU's letter to Congress, go to:
<http://www.aclu.org/safefree/general/27883leg20070109.html>

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

– Martin Luther King

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See scheduled events, pictures of officers and current and archived newsletters at our website:

<http://hawaii.humanists.net/>

If you'd like to receive your personal email at the prestigious Humanists.net address, contact WebMaster Mike at the address or phone number above.

HH's Meeting Place Room 112 Krauss Hall

Driving on Dole Street past the University, turn mauka on East West Road then ewa on Correa Road. Drive to the end and turn makai toward the circle with the big tree. There's free parking on part of the circle, on the other side of Krauss Hall and various lots around campus. The entrance to Krauss Hall 112 is at the Diamondhead end of the lily pond.

HH meets the last (not the fourth) Sunday of each month at 10:30 am. We'll have an HH sign by the door. Hope to see you all.



10 myths -- and 10 truths -- about atheism

by Sam Harris in *Los Angeles Times*

SEVERAL POLLS indicate that the term "atheism" has acquired such an extraordinary stigma in the United States that being an atheist is now a perfect impediment to a career in politics (in a way that being black, Muslim or homosexual is not). According to a recent *Newsweek* poll, only 37% of Americans would vote for an otherwise qualified atheist for president.

Atheists are often imagined to be intolerant, immoral, depressed, blind to the beauty of nature and dogmatically closed to evidence of the supernatural.

Even John Locke, one of the great patriarchs of the Enlightenment, believed that atheism was "not at all to be tolerated" because, he said, "promises, covenants and oaths, which are the bonds of human societies, can have no hold upon an atheist."

That was more than 300 years ago. But in the United States today, little seems to have changed. A remarkable 87% of the population claims "never to doubt" the existence of God; fewer than 10% identify themselves as atheists — and their reputation appears to be deteriorating.

Given that we know that atheists are often among the most intelligent and scientifically literate people in any society, it seems important to deflate the myths that prevent them from playing a larger role in our national discourse.

1) Atheists believe that life is meaningless.

On the contrary, religious people often worry that life is meaningless and imagine that it can only be redeemed by the promise of eternal happiness beyond the grave. Atheists tend to be quite sure that life is precious. Life is imbued with meaning by being really and fully lived. Our relationships with those we love are meaningful now; they need not last forever to be made so. Atheists tend to find this fear of meaninglessness ... well ... meaningless.

2) Atheism is responsible for the greatest crimes in human history.

People of faith often claim that the crimes of Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot were the inevitable product of unbelief. The problem with fascism and communism, however, is not that they are too critical of religion; the problem is that they are too much like religions. Such regimes are dogmatic to the core and generally give rise to personality cults that are indistinguishable from cults of religious hero worship. Auschwitz, the gulag and the killing fields were not examples of what happens when human beings reject religious dogma; they are examples of political, racial and nationalistic dogma run amok.

There is no society in human history that ever suffered because its people became too reasonable.

3) Atheism is dogmatic.

Jews, Christians and Muslims claim that their scriptures are so prescient of humanity's needs that they could only have been written under the direction of an omniscient deity. An atheist is simply a person who has considered this claim, read the books and found the claim to be ridiculous. One doesn't have to take anything on faith, or be otherwise dogmatic, to reject unjustified religious beliefs. As the historian Stephen Henry Roberts (1901-71) once said: "I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."

4) Atheists think everything in the universe arose by chance.

No one knows why the universe came into being. In fact, it is not entirely clear that we can coherently speak about the "beginning" or "creation" of the universe at all, as these ideas invoke the concept of time, and here we are talking about the origin of space-time itself.

The notion that atheists believe that everything was created by chance is also regularly thrown up as a criticism of Darwinian evolution. As Richard Dawkins explains in his marvelous book, "The God Delusion," this represents an utter misunderstanding of evolutionary theory. Although we don't know precisely how the Earth's early chemistry begat biology, we know that the diversity and complexity we see in the living world is not a product of mere chance. Evolution is a combination of chance mutation and natural selection. Darwin arrived at the phrase "natural selection" by analogy to the "artificial selection" performed by breeders of livestock. In both cases, selection exerts a highly non-random effect on the development of any species.

5) Atheism has no connection to science.

Although it is possible to be a scientist and still believe in God — as some scientists seem to manage it — there is no question that an engagement with scientific thinking tends to erode, rather than support, religious faith. Taking the U.S. population as an example: Most polls show that about 90% of the general public believes in a personal God; yet 93% of the members of the National Academy of Sciences do not. This suggests that there are few modes of thinking less congenial to religious faith than science is.

6) Atheists are arrogant.

When scientists don't know something — like why the universe came into being or how the first self-replicating molecules formed — they admit it. Pretending to know things one doesn't know is a profound liability in science. And yet it is the life-blood of faith-based religion. One of the monumental ironies of religious discourse can be found in the frequency with which people of faith praise themselves for their humility, while claiming to know facts about cosmology, chemistry and biology that no scientist knows. When considering questions about the nature of the cosmos and our place within it, atheists tend to draw their opinions from science. This isn't arrogance; it is intellectual honesty.

7) Atheists are closed to spiritual experience.

There is nothing that prevents an atheist from experiencing love, ecstasy, rapture and awe; atheists can value these experiences and seek them regularly. What atheists don't tend to do is make unjustified (and unjustifiable) claims about the nature of reality on the basis of such experiences. There is no question that some Christians have transformed their lives for the better by reading the Bible and praying to Jesus. What does this prove? It proves that certain disciplines of attention and codes of conduct can have a profound effect upon the human mind. Do the positive experiences of Christians suggest that Jesus is the sole savior of humanity? Not even remotely — because Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and even atheists regularly have similar experiences.

There is, in fact, not a Christian on this Earth who can be certain that Jesus even wore a beard, much less that he was born of a virgin or rose from the dead. These are just not the sort of claims that spiritual experience can authenticate.

8) Atheists believe that there is nothing beyond human life and human understanding.

Atheists are free to admit the limits of human understanding in a way that religious people are not. It is obvious that we do not fully understand the universe; but it is even more obvious that neither the Bible nor the Koran reflects our best understanding of it. We do not know whether there is complex life elsewhere in the cosmos, but there might be. If there is, such beings could have developed an understanding of nature's laws that vastly exceeds our own. Atheists can freely entertain such

possibilities. They also can admit that if brilliant extraterrestrials exist, the contents of the Bible and the Koran will be even less impressive to them than they are to human atheists.

From the atheist point of view, the world's religions utterly trivialize the real beauty and immensity of the universe. One doesn't have to accept anything on insufficient evidence to make such an observation.

9) Atheists ignore the fact that religion is extremely beneficial to society.

Those who emphasize the good effects of religion never seem to realize that such effects fail to demonstrate the truth of any religious doctrine. This is why we have terms such as "wishful thinking" and "self-deception." There is a profound distinction between a consoling delusion and the truth.

In any case, the good effects of religion can surely be disputed. In most cases, it seems that religion gives people bad reasons to behave well, when good reasons are actually available. Ask yourself, which is more moral, helping the poor out of concern for their suffering, or doing so because you think the creator of the universe wants you to do it, will reward you for doing it or will punish you for not doing it?

10) Atheism provides no basis for morality.

If a person doesn't already understand that cruelty is wrong, he won't discover this by reading the Bible or the Koran — as these books are bursting with celebrations of cruelty, both human and divine. We do not get our morality from religion. We decide what is good in our good books by recourse to moral intuitions that are (at some level) hard-wired in us and that have been refined by thousands of years of thinking about the causes and possibilities of human happiness.

We have made considerable moral progress over the years, and we didn't make this progress by reading the Bible or the Koran more closely. Both books condone the practice of slavery — and yet every civilized human being now recognizes that slavery is an abomination. Whatever is good in scripture — like the golden rule — can be valued for its ethical wisdom without our believing that it was handed down to us by the creator of the universe.

Sam Harris is the author of The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason and Letter to a Christian Nation.

Humanism is the viewpoint that human beings have but one life to lead and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness; that happiness is its own justification and requires no sanction or support from supernatural sources; and that, using intelligence and cooperating openly with one another, humans can build an enduring standard of peace, justice and sustainability upon this Earth.

— American Humanist Association

Humanist letters

I did an atrocious job editing Carolyn's letter in the earlier January HH newsletter. My apologies, Carolyn. Here's the real version as published in the January 13th Honolulu Advertiser:

Cutting DOE budget won't help students

The Jan. 8 Island Voices column, "Giving more money to DOE not the answer," contains a common misconception.

If the Department of Education cuts its budget, where will the money come from to pay for additional classrooms to address the overflowing classrooms, or the additional teachers to correct the teacher-to-student ratio or the textbooks for students?

If students are to learn, they need adequate classroom space, teachers to help educate them and the proper equipment.

It's usually those who have never attended a public school, or had children in public schools or worked in a public school who shout: Cut DOE's budget.

This is one puzzling column – a teacher promoting cutting the DOE budget. It's one for the books.

Carolyn Martinez Golojuch
Makakilo

This letter from Juel was published in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin on January 10, 2007

Is America ready for atheists in office?

CNN has been running a fine series about prejudice in America. But has CNN considered the persistent prejudice against atheists? If Sen. Barack Obama had followed the example of his father (an atheist) or his mother (witness of secular humanism), what would his chances be to run for president of the United States? Or for that matter, most public offices?

Juel Gustafson
Honolulu

This letter was published in MidWeek January 10th:

War Haters

From his letter, Geoff Boehm sounds like a big listener of "Faux News." We "Bush Haters," as he puts it, hate his war and all of the deaths, injuries and destruction he has caused just to kill one man, Saddam Hussein – a dictator who had nothing to do with 9/11 or with us (except when Cheney and Rumsfeld helped to arm him decades ago).

And "Bush protecting us"? He was warned by President Clinton as he took office. When an FBI agent in Arizona asked why Saudis were attending schools here and learning to fly but not land large aircraft, she was ignored. The Bush Administration received a memo in August 2001 stating that "Bin

Laden set to attack US" and Bush spent the month of August on his ranch cutting brush and riding his bike.

Mr. Boehm, and others, try to tell us that Bush is protecting us from terrorism, but you cannot prove a negative. Bush has ruined our reputation and made us hated around the world. He, himself, requires unprecedented protection when he ventures out. He is by far the worst president in our history and has done great harm to America and the world.

Nancy Bey Little
Makiki

More wise quotes

The web – via Ed Corl

Winston Churchill: "One of the greatest arguments against democracy is a ten minute conversation with the average voter."

-- Winston Churchill

"As democracy is perfected, the office of the president resembles more and more closely the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day, the plain folks will reach their hearts' desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."

-- HL Mencken

More interview with a retiree

Secular humorism from the net via Ed Corl

Question: How many days in a week?

Answer: 6 Saturdays, 1 Sunday

Question: Why don't retirees mind being called Seniors?

Answer: The term comes with a 10% percent discount.

Question: Among retirees what is considered formal attire?

Answer: Tied shoes.

Question: Why do retirees count pennies?

Answer: They are the only ones who have the time.

Question: What is the common term for someone who enjoys work and refuses to retire?

Answer: NUTS!

Question: What is the best way to describe retirement?

Answer: The never ending Coffee Break.

Question: What's the biggest advantage of going back to school as a retiree?

Answer: If you cut classes, no one calls your parents.

Question: Why does a retiree often say he doesn't miss work, but misses the folks he used to work with?

Answer: He is too polite to tell the whole truth.

My favorite one:

Question: What do you do all week?

Answer: Monday to Friday nothing, Saturday and Sunday I rest.

How Old is the Grand Canyon? Park Service won't say

Orders to cater to creationists makes national park agnostic on geology

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

Washington DC – Grand Canyon National Park is not permitted to give an official estimate of the geologic age of its principal feature, due to pressure from Bush administration appointees. Despite promising a prompt review of its approval for a book claiming the Grand Canyon was created by Noah's flood rather than by geologic forces, more than three years later no review has been done and the book remains on sale at the park, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

"In order to avoid offending religious fundamentalists, our National Park Service is under orders to suspend its belief in geology," stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch. "It is disconcerting that the official position of a national park as to the geologic age of the Grand Canyon is "no comment."

In a letter released today, PEER urged the new Director of the National Park Service (NPS), Mary Bomar, to end the stalling tactics, remove the book from sale at the park and allow park interpretive rangers to honestly answer questions from the public about the geologic age of the Grand Canyon. PEER is also asking Director Bomar to approve a pamphlet, suppressed since 2002 by Bush appointees, providing guidance for rangers and other interpretive staff in making distinctions between science and religion when speaking to park visitors about geologic issues.

In August 2003, Park Superintendent Joe Alston attempted to block the sale at park bookstores of *Grand Canyon: A Different View* by Tom Vail, a book claiming the Canyon developed on a biblical rather than an evolutionary time scale. NPS Headquarters, however, intervened and overruled Alston. To quiet the resulting furor, NPS Chief of Communications David Barna told reporters and members of Congress that there would be a high-level policy review of the issue.

According to a recent NPS response to a Freedom

of Information Act request filed by PEER, no such review was ever requested, let alone conducted or completed.

Park officials have defended the decision to approve the sale of *Grand Canyon: A Different View*, claiming that park bookstores are like libraries, where the broadest range of views are displayed. In fact, however, both law and park policies make it clear that the park bookstores are more like schoolrooms rather than libraries. As such, materials are only to reflect the highest quality science and are supposed to closely support approved interpretive themes. Moreover, unlike a library the approval process is very selective. Records released to PEER show that during 2003, Grand Canyon officials rejected 22 books and other products for bookstore placement while approving only one new sale item – the creationist book.

Ironically, in 2005, two years after the Grand Canyon creationist controversy erupted, NPS approved a new directive on "Interpretation and Education" (Director's Order #6) which restating that materials on the "history of the Earth must be based on the best scientific evidence available, as found in scholarly sources that have stood the test of scientific peer review and criticism [and] Interpretive and educational programs must refrain from appearing to endorse religious beliefs explaining natural processes."

"As one park geologist said, this is equivalent of Yellowstone National Park selling a book entitled *Geysers of Old Faithful: Nostrils of Satan*," Ruch added, pointing to the fact that previous NPS leadership ignored strong protests from both its own scientists and leading geological societies against the agency approval of the creationist book. "We sincerely hope that the new Director of the Park Service now has the autonomy to do her job."

Do you think that humans should search relentlessly for truth, that they feel compassion for all humankind and determine and promote what is right?

Do you think people can live meaningful, responsible and ethical lives without the need for believing in supernatural beings or places?

Would you like to join a group that shares your thoughts? Humanists – generally – believe these things.

If you'd like to join Humanists Hawaii, please complete and mail this form to: Marcia Lambeth at 825 Coolidge St. #310 Honolulu HI 96826. During 2007 we aren't collecting annual dues, but donations are gratefully accepted.

Dr/Mr/Ms _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phones: Home: _____ Work: _____ email: _____

Congressman Virgil Goode needs civics lesson, say Humanists

Anti-Muslim Position Contrary to the Law of the Land
American Humanist Association

"By his recent letter, House member Virgil Goode has displayed a shocking lack of respect for those of his constituents who don't share his Christian faith: not only Muslims but Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Wiccans, atheists, humanists and others," said Mel Lipman, constitutional lawyer and president of the American Humanist Association. "If Virgil Goode is to continue serving in Congress, he needs a refresher course in basic American civics."

Lipman's comment was part of the indignation expressed today by AHA leaders when they saw for the first time the text of a [letter sent by Rep. Virgil Goode](#) (R-VA) to his constituents on December 7.

In that letter Goode writes that "if American citizens don't wake up and adopt the Virgil Goode position on immigration there will likely be many more Muslims elected to office." He added that we need to "end the diversity visas policy pushed hard by President Clinton and allowing many persons from the Middle East to come to this country" so as to "preserve the values and beliefs traditional to the United States of America."

In response, Lipman added, "Goode should have learned that 'the values and beliefs traditional to the United States of America' are that of secular government in a pluralistic society."

Lipman cited the [First Amendment to the US Constitution](#) which opens with the words, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

And the 1796 [US treaty with the Muslim nation of Tripoli](#) which says, "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion." This [treaty was approved](#) by Congress in the administration of John Adams. And these documents constitute part of the "supreme Law of the Land" as defined in [Article VI of the Constitution](#).

The AHA has long held that the American principle of government neutrality on religion requires that no official favoritism or hostility be shown to those of any religion or no religion. Goode takes the opposite position, writing, "When I raise my hand to take the oath on Swearing In Day, I will have the Bible in my other hand. I do not subscribe to using the Koran [sic] in any way."

"Properly speaking," Lipman concluded, "neither the Bible nor the Quran, nor any other holy book, should be used at any swearing-in ceremony for any public office. Those we elect must represent and serve all of their constituents, not just those who are adherents of their favored faith."



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