



Americans United for Separation of Church and State

3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, CA 92704

On the web at www.au-oc.org Email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com

End of Life Choices

With Dr. C. Ronald Koons

Saturday, July 21st at 2:00 pm

Irvine Ranch Water District

15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine

July/August

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Inside this issue:

At AU we recognize that end of life decisions should never be made for us by those who seek to impose a religious agenda or make a political statement. So the Orange County chapter is very proud to bring Dr. C. Ronald Koons to our chapter.



Americans are living longer because of modern medical science. As we get older, the deterioration of the body can slowly diminish the quality of life. At the same time, physicians keep doing more to keep us alive. Many of us have complained about what our loved ones were put through during their dying process.

Congress passed legislation allowing us to sign an advanced directive describing our wishes should we be unable to communicate at our life's end. However, a study showed that physicians don't necessarily listen to patients or comply with their patient's directive. This dilemma is best answered by understanding our own feeling about death, knowing our options, and conveying our views to our family and loved ones—and understand how the medical

profession thinks about dying.

These steps can make the dying process a more positive and meaningful experience. A hospice program can help us to do it better.

Dr. C. Ronald Koons received his M.D. from the University of Maryland and his MMSc degree from Ohio. He served two years in the U.S. Navy at Bethesda in Nuclear Medicine and has taught at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine with joint appointments in cancer chemotherapy and radiation therapy. After moving to California in 1976 he practiced radiation oncology for 19 years, and has been an Assoc. Professor at UCI for 20 years and serves on the Ethics, Steering, Palliative Care, and Clinical Trials Protocol Review and Monitoring Committees at UCI. He is a part-time physician for two hospices County and he also teaches.

He also champions legislative changes, under strict guidelines and safeguards, so that physician assistance in dying can become available to terminally ill patients.

Please join us to hear this important speaker and engage in the discussion following the presentation.

As always, there is no charge for this event. ☘☘☘

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From Barry Lynn:

"Jerry Falwell is no longer with us, but the fundamentalist political movement he helped shape certainly is. The Religious Right is politically connected, well funded and extreme in its agenda. Without Falwell ranting on television, the Religious Right may be less visible, but it's no less dangerous. Americans would be wise to be wary of the Religious Right's continuing clout."

Message from the President—Steph Campbell

As you know we had Michael Newdow as a speaker for our May meeting—the man who is known for his litigation on the “under God” piece of the Pledge of Allegiance. And even though the Pledge was the focus of the meeting, it never occurred to me to start the meeting with the recitation of the Pledge—and I don’t think it occurred to Michael either. But Ellen Brown, San Diego Chapter president and great supporter of the Orange County chapter, raised the question to an AU National message board as to whether or not it would be a good idea. For a little while the responses were coming in at a fast and furious pace. The consensus was that it wasn’t something most AU chapters wanted to do. But there were some wonderful alternatives presented, such as reciting the First Amendment—or just the first 16 words of that Amendment. One of my favorite comments in this dialog came from Beth Corbin who stated “The national office was recently asked by a chapter leader if their members could vote on whether or not to recite the Pledge at their meetings..” She explained “AU has long advocated that religious liberty should never be

decided by majority vote—it should just exist because of our First Amendment guarantee.” I love the fact that it should just exist ... don’t you?

And as I write this there is another fiery discussion brewing about how much Americans United should support the cases that Michael Newdow is pursuing: on the Pledge and on “In God We Trust” on the money. As a pragmatist I would say let’s look at where we should put our limited resources. What will do us the most good. If fighting another Intelligent Design case is the right place, then maybe resources behind the Pledge aren’t a good idea. And yet what statement do we make if we don’t support Newdow. After all our mission is that we are “dedicated to preserving the constitutional principle of church-state separation as the only way to ensure religious freedom for all Americans.” So surely we should support Mr. Newdow.

Write to us and let us know what you think!

Steph Campbell

Constantine's Sword

A movie has been made of the book Constantine's Sword by James Carroll. The book is his story of his personal journey to confront his past as a former Catholic priest and to uncover the roots of religiously inspired violence and war. Along the way his search reveals the growing religious infiltration of the U.S. military and the terrible consequences of religion's influence on America's foreign policy.

The movie focuses on Christian anti-semitism as the model for all religious hatred and shows the cross as a symbol of a long history of violence against Jews and Muslims. The film brings the history of religious intolerance to life, tracing it as a source of the fanaticism that threatens the world today.

The movie is currently on the festival circuit and should be in Art Houses soon. ☘☘☘

Save These Dates!

July 29th — **The Humanist Association of Orange County** invites Americans United members to join them at their 10th anniversary picnic which will be at the William Mason Regional Park (near UCI) beginning at 12:30. As more information becomes available we will post it on our web site or contact them at ochumanists@aol.com. For those who aren't familiar with the Humanists, they follow a “progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.”¹

¹ <http://www.americanhumanist.org/index.html>

August 18th — **Come to the movies with Americans United.** We will be showing the documentary “Whose Death Is It Anyway?” This documentary looks at a variety of different issues relating to end of life care such as legal rights, family conflicts over decisions, advance directives and comfort care.

This should be a timely follow up to our July event with Dr. Koons. We are planning to have someone at the event who can talk about Advanced Directives and Health Proxies. The film is very thought provoking and will undoubtedly make each of us think about what preparations and plans we each have made. ☘☘☘

Mikey Weinstein's Appearance in Costa Mesa

Mikey Weinstein is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and served as a judge advocate (JAG) for 10 years in the Air Force and worked for more than three years as legal counsel for the Reagan White House. More importantly he is the founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation which has been battling evangelicals in the military. He came to Orange County on June 17th in a visit sponsored by the Center for Inquiry West (www.cfiwest.org). His talk was frightening, inspiring and devastating.

Mr. Weinstein began his talk by telling us that this was "a call to arms" - he wanted action — and not the kind that is a letter to the paper or your local Congress member. He wanted us to financially support our convictions.

And he was convincing. He described, with many specifics, how all four branches of the military have been hijacked by a right-wing, fundamentalist Christian agenda. His interpretation that this violation of the constitutional separation between church and state puts our entire nation in jeopardy cannot be doubted. Nor can his view that the current administration has turned the entire military into its own personal faith-based initiative. He wants our support because he believes the only possible resolution is in litigation—rationale discussion with the military gets him nowhere—and he has lost faith in the other branches of government.

In February 2004 he first became aware of virulent anti-Semitism at the Air Force Academy from his son. As he describes in his book ([With God On Our Side](#)) upper classmen surrounded his son and accused him of being a "Christ killer" - not only did his peers not support him but the military was busy looking the other way. And the more Weinstein investigated the more he discovered. He explained that there are Christian Fellowships on every U.S. base in the world. One "fellowship" for officers and one for enlisted on each base. The primary goals of these groups are spiritual transformation of the U.S. Military and to have Ambassadors for Christ in uniform.

And these are most definitely not members of mainstream Christianity. These are Dominionists and Reconstructionists.

Dominionists have as their goal the conversion of U.S. law to match Biblical law. They plan to do this by Christian religious school education and then later charging their graduates with creating a Bible-based political, religious and social order. One of the tasks of this order will be to eliminate religious choice and

freedom. Christian Reconstructionism calls for its members to put their faith into action in all areas of life by applying Biblical principles. It includes belief in the Rapture, the event where all Christians living on earth are simultaneously transported to heaven to be with Jesus. This is important because prior to the rapture are the tribulations when there is chaos throughout the world. Weinstein urges us to look beyond oil when we think of Iraq but begin to think of the world in terms of these ideologues.

If all of this seems a trifle far-fetched to you, consider that since he began his organization he has had over 4,500 active military personnel, mostly Christian, come to his Foundation asking for help.

And recently Weinstein discovered on the Ft. Leavenworth web site (since removed from Ft. Leavenworth but available on the Military Religious Freedom Foundation site) some remarkable documents. Remember that this is a web site that is maintained by the U.S. Army. On this military web site there is a study guide that says anyone who turns from Christianity to Judaism "should be condemned to spiritual death and hell." But such inflammatory documents—which clearly violate the separation of church and state—don't surprise Weinstein. He explains that the military of today fosters 4 goals:

- Anti-Semitism
- Homophobia
- Degradation of women
- Subordination of the rule of law to the rule of Christ (or a rather warped view of Christ)

A final note. In Weinstein's book he quotes a lengthy report from Americans United for Separation of Church and State that states "The investigation...into the policies and practices of the U.S. Air Force Academy has revealed numerous flagrant and egregious violations of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as a general climate of religious coercion and official hostility toward those who do not practice evangelical Christianity. We have concluded that both the specific violations and the promotion of a culture of official religious intolerance are pervasive, systematic, and evident at the very highest levels of the Academy's command structure."

Mikey Weinstein's view is that they must be stopped.

I agree! I went home and logged on to his web site to make a donation (www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org). I hope you will consider doing the same. ☸☸☸



Americans United-OC Chapter
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 Santa Ana, CA 92704

We're on the web
 at www.au-oc.org



July

29— Join the Humanist Association of Orange County for their 10th anniversary picnic at William Mason Park in Irvine

August

18—Join us for the documentary “Whose Death Is It Anyway?” and a discussion of Advanced Directives—what they are and how they’re done.

July

21 — Dr. Roy Koons, retired oncology professor will speak on End of Life Issues (Irvine Ranch Water District, Multi-Purpose Room at 2 pm)

Every Month

AU-OC Steering Committee
Usually meets following the monthly meetings. All members are encouraged to participate. Call 714-299-4551 for details.

Keep Up To Date with Americans United-Orange County

Along with our newsletter, we keep people informed with what’s going on in the fight to preserve separation of church and state as well as our events through the web site at www.au-oc.org and also through our Yahoo! Group. If you’re not on the Yahoo! Group, send an email to us at: au-oc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. We meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 pm.

Irvine Ranch Water District neither supports nor endorses the cause nor activities of organizations which use the District’s meeting rooms that are made available as a public service.

Join or Renew Today!

Basic membership is \$25 and includes an annual subscription to Church & State magazine. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and donations beyond the \$18.00 value of the subscription to Church & State magazine are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Email any questions to orangecountyau@yahoo.com; to join or renew, complete this form and mail to the chapter at: **3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, California 92704**

New Membership Renewal Membership Special Donation

\$25 **\$50** **\$75** **\$100** **Other** _____

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