

If it ain't broke, don't fix it! Someone is trying to strangle the separation of church and state in Missouri, and his name is Mike McGhee (R-Odessa). He recently introduced a proposed amendment to the Missouri Constitution that is so vague, and so deceptively worded, that it gives the allusion of religious freedom while at the same time trying to hang it.

On the surface, the amendment looks good. It reads, "that [the amendment is] to secure a citizen's right to acknowledge Almighty God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience, [and that] neither the state nor any of its political subdivisions shall establish any official religion, nor shall a citizen's right to pray or express his or her religious beliefs be infringed."

Who wouldn't want that, right? A little presumptuous about the idea of all citizens thinking that Almighty God actually exists, but otherwise, this is not a bad statement. But then things get a little tricky. It states

...that the General Assembly and the governing bodies of political subdivisions may extend to ministers and clergypersons the privilege to offer invocations or other prayers at meetings or sessions of the General Assembly or governing bodies; that the state shall ensure public school students their right to free exercise of religious expression without interference, as long as such prayer or other expression is private and voluntary, whether individually or corporately, and in a manner that is not disruptive and as long as such prayers or expressions abide within the same parameters placed upon any other free speech under similar circumstances; and, to emphasize the right to free exercise of religious expression, that all free public schools receiving state appropriations shall display, in a conspicuous and legible manner, the text of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States.

There are a couple of scary things in that paragraph. First, this amendment would clearly violate the US Constitution, which is the ultimate authority on this matter. Second, the bill gives religious clergy (and of course, this really means Christian ministers) the legal authority to preside over government run, taxpayer supported meetings and gatherings—which again violates the separation of church and state the founding fathers worked so hard to maintain. Third, it allows students and teachers to become puppets of large Christian-funded, and Christian-oriented corporate entities. This includes groups like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, who pray on young minds, and teach them to despise anyone non-Christian. According to the fellowship of Christian Athletes, students should stay away from Muslims, Atheists, gays and lesbians, and people who try to lead you astray from God by giving you “deceptive” facts—these are facts that, of course, disprove anything about the bible.

So, based on this law, a child (or teacher) could stand up in the middle of class and say, "I'm with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and if you want to improve your grade, why not give God a try. Right now, Satan has a grip on you, but Jesus can save you." The amendment is worded so vague as to allow a foundational bridge between

church and state to be built that will take years to tear down, when the truth about the deception is brought to light.

Finally, this amendment replaces a perfectly functional section of the Missouri State Constitution (the link is below). Why fix something that isn't broke?

Below are a few links that you can use to make your voice heard. It is in the interest of everyone that this amendment not pass. Thomas Jefferson knew that a marriage of religion and state affairs was a recipe for tyranny; and he was a person many would put in the theist category. We all need to take a moment to let our elected officials know our thoughts on this.

Free thinking people make up almost 25% of the population. That's more than all the ethnic minority groups combined!

You can find your Missouri state legislators here:

http://www.senate.mo.gov/llookup/leg_lookup.aspx

Here is a short Associated Press article about the resolution:

http://www.kansascity.com/news/breaking_news/story/1152964.html

The text of the proposed amendment:

<http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills091/biltxt/perf/HJR0011P.HTM>

The text of Article 1 Section 5 of the Missouri Constitution which the proposed amendment would replace: <http://www.moga.mo.gov/const/A01005.HTM>