



First Friday News & Views

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The Monthly Newsletter
of the First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.

Motives Matter By Jonathan Wilson

There is a false dichotomy going around suggesting that there's a difficult balance to be struck between protected religious freedom and illegal discrimination. It is a false dichotomy. It is a prime example of misunderstanding religious freedom, the limits of religious freedom, and the right to freedom from religion-based discrimination in a secular society governed by a foundational document like the US Constitution.

It's really pretty simple; if your problem with me is based on your religious belief, then my disagreement – my contrary belief – must be a “religious belief” also. And when we are engaged in the public market place for goods, services, employment, education, housing, whatever, you cannot discriminate against me on that basis. Discrimination based on religion is illegal, period, end of sentence, drop voice. See *United States Constitution, First Amendment*. No brilliance or constitutional scholarship is required to understand this. The same protection is embodied in every state constitution as well.

This basic principle does not require a Jewish grocer to sell bacon, as some have suggested disingenuously; it requires a Jewish grocer who is selling whatever, to sell that to anyone wishing to buy.

There are legally protected categories for a reason: history. Each and every protected category is protected because there's a history of unwarranted discrimination based on each of those characteristics in a secular society. It is not protection of minorities as some seem, mistakenly, to perceive. Everyone exhibits *all* of the protected characteristics. Everyone has a gender. Everyone has a race. Everyone has a national origin or nationality. Everyone has (or, at some point, will have) a disability. And everyone has a religion or the right to be free from the religion of others being imposed upon them. Everyone has all of those characteristics and the right to be protected from discrimination based upon all or any of them.

I cannot refuse services to or employment of an evangelical “Christian,” no matter how much I might want to do so. No matter how tempting it would be.

This analytical framework affords LGBTQ protection at the national level and the state level because **the US Constitution and every state constitution protects against religion-based discrimination**. This is true even though there is no *legislative* protection of equality at the federal or, in some cases, at the state level. No matter; protection against religion-based discrimination is protected at both levels of government. And it will be so until those constitutions are amended to establish a theocracy.

Obviously, this analytical framework requires a close examination of motives. If religion is the motivating factor, there's undeniable protection from discrimination based on religion. If, however, an LGBTQ employer in Florida,

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The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, June 2, 2017, at Hoyt Sherman
Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines,
IA. RSVP by May 31 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com, or phone
515-288-2500

for example (where there is no protection legislatively for sexual orientation), decides to fire a straight person *solely* because they're straight - no problem and no protection. Likewise, if a straight employer fires or refuses to hire a gay person *solely* for that reason - the so-called "yuck excuse" - and not based on a religious belief, there is also no problem and no protection. But, if that straight (or closeted) employer is motivated by a religion-based animus toward gay people, that's a problem and is clearly illegal, *religious* discrimination.

I know there are those who will assert that it's impossible to determine the underlying motive for discrimination. It is NOT impossible; our legal system has been in the business of, and is well-equipped to, decipher an actor's motive. It's done in the context of homicide, for example, marking the difference between first degree murder, second degree murder, manslaughter, and self-defense. If you planned and intended to commit the homicide, it's murder. If you acted in self-defense, there's no culpability. Motive creates the gradations in between. In the employment context, our judicial system is experienced at weeding out pretextual acts of discrimination and punishing those who try to cover their illegally discriminatory tracks.

Herein lies protection for LGBTQ citizens in every state in this nation. Motives matter. If the motive for acts of discrimination is prompted by the religious beliefs of the perpetrator, the target/victim is protected by the US and *every* state constitution. Amen

FFBC Joins Pride Center for Meals From the Heartland

By Rick Miller

The First Friday Breakfast Club is joining the Pride Center along with other LGBTQ+ organizations for a service project that will bring increased awareness of our community in the Des Moines area. As the LGBTQ+ community has matured, many are interested in doing work that brings love, respect, and care to those that are in need. Many of you may have already participated in "Meals From The Heartland" and spent a couple of hours helping make food packets for distribution in the US and abroad. These food packets are some of the only hope some refugee groups have for nutrition.

On Friday, June 2 from 10am until 6pm, the Pride Center will host "Meals" in the Community Center at the Mickle Building located just behind Hoyt Sher

man Place in the old Jewish Retirement Center (1620 Pleasant Street). All you need to bring are two hands and a willing heart. Since the FFBC budget does not account for the expense for the event, Tim Schreck, (FFBC Board Member) has stepped forward to cover our entry fee for this endeavor. Thanks Tim for your generosity and commitment to our organization.

Providing dignity, honor, and self-respect as we join together as a community and receive publicity for this worthwhile effort is one of the main goals. There may be reporters and media coverage. The Pride Center hopes you will all try to make time for this Pride event and place it on your calendar for the weekend activities.

Briefs & Shorts

Volunteers still needed: Please consider volunteering to help "man" the FFBC tent during the Pride celebration on June 10 and/or June 11. If you're willing/able, contact Rick Miller [erik2000dsm@aol.com].

Be sure to RSVP by May 31 for the June 2, 2017, meeting by calling 515-288-2500, or on line at: JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our speaker in June will be **Rev. Anna Blaedel**, an ordained United Methodist minister, and an avowed, out lesbian. Given the current stance of the Church as expressed in the Book of Discipline, Rev. Blaedel is a walking, talking profile in courage – much like the courageous recipients of the FFBC scholarships. This year's scholarship winners will also be attending the meeting with family members. You won't want to miss. You are encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!!

Save the date. The annual FFBC - PROS party will be Saturday, July 22, 2017, 7-10 pm at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen Vanderlinden, 7500 Benton Drive, Urbandale.

Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details. Thanks to those who have given to the scholarship program. We are awarding eight scholarships this year.



Slow

BSA Progress is Still Progress

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday, May 5, 2017, was Robert Hopper, Scout Executive (CEO) since 2009 of the Mid-Iowa Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Bob gave us an interesting and thoughtful account of the Scouts' recent history, attending in particular to the organization's recent announcements that it would start admitting into its ranks openly gay boys (2014) and troop leaders (May 2015) and transgender boys (January 2017).

Hopper began by citing the continuing relevance of the twelve points of the Scout Law ("A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent"), at the same time as he recounted continual change in specific goals since the program began well over a century ago: the Scout Handbook, he noted, in its 13th edition as of 2016, no longer suggests learning how to handle a runaway horse, or how to type Morse Code.

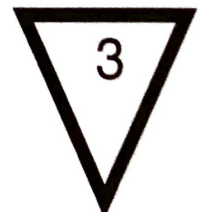
Hopper was forthright in acknowledging the Scouts' belated acceptance of American society's changed attitudes toward sexual orientation and identity. But "I'm for kids," he kept emphasizing. "Our perspective is full speed ahead. If a young person wants to join our program, they'll be welcome to join. I know not everyone's positive with it ... but I'm for kids. If you want to join, we'll figure out a way to make it work for you." As CEO, he had himself worked with 30 sponsoring churches that felt unable to accept the

changes – and found new homes for 29 of those Scout units.

The Q&A following was especially impressive, showing Hopper's subtle – and amusing – understanding of how words and their uses and meanings have changed over time, and how those changes work to refashion moral and political discourse. (You can listen to Hopper's whole speech again -- or for the first time -- by going online to our Web site, <ffbc Iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.)

Robert Hopper was born in the UK and raised in the US, going to college in the 1970s at Murray State University (Murray, pop. c17,500, is in the southwest corner of Kentucky, about halfway between Nashville and Cape Girardeau), where he earned a BS in outdoor recreation. Growing up in a military family, and working professionally for the Boy Scouts of America for almost 40 years, he has resided all over the country, in Louisiana, Nebraska, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Kentucky, Michigan, and Indiana, where he was CEO of the Buffalo Trace Council in Evansville from 1994 to 2008. He has held the post of CEO of the Mid-Iowa Council since 2009, managing an area covering 27 counties, with 18 full-time employees, and 20,000 volunteers and members in 345 boy-scout troops and cub-scout packs, and a budget of close to \$3 million. The local council has \$22 million in total assets, including a state-of-the-art \$13.5 million headquarters, three camp operations, 500 acres of wilderness preserve, and a \$10,000,000 endowment fund.

Hopper lives in suburban Des Moines with his wife, Pam, a special-needs teacher; they have three children and six grandchildren. He can be reached at the Boy Scouts' Mid-Iowa Council Office at 515/266-2135.



IT'S TIME TO CHANGE COURSE...
FOR A BETTER IOWA
by Iowa Senator Matt McCoy

The 2017 session wrapped up on Saturday, April 22. It was a bad year for working families and vulnerable Iowans. Not only are the Branstad-Reynolds Administration, legislative Republicans and out-of-state special interests driving down wages, cutting health care and degrading our quality of life, they managed to turn Iowa's \$928 million surplus into a \$130 million deficit.

To fill their budget hole, they took \$131 million from the state's Cash Reserve Fund. That's nothing more than a Band-Aid. It won't fix the problem, and paying back the money means more cuts that force students and families to pay for failed policies.

We are in this position because the Branstad-Reynolds Administration broke their promises to increase family incomes by 25 percent and to create more than 200,000 new jobs. Iowa's economy has slowed, the state budget is in the red and it's becom-

ing harder to attract the top-notch workers that every Iowa community and business wants.

Working families—the backbone of our communities and way of life—have been pushed aside and disregarded.

We must change course and make working families, communities and small businesses a priority again by:

- Investing in K-12 schools and preventing more school closures, especially in small towns and rural areas
- Keeping down the cost of college and job training
- Making health care accessible to all Iowans
- Paying fair, living wages to all workers
- Re-examining tax breaks for big, out-of-state corporations

To find out more about how the 2017 session will impact Iowans, go to www.mccoyforiowa.com or connect on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/senatormccoy/>.

Snatched

Review by Gary Kaufman

Amy Shumer and Goldie Hawn have teamed up in **Snatched**, Goldie's first movie in 14 years. It's good to have her back. **Snatched** is a movie about many things: it's about the importance of living life to the fullest; the indifference of governmental bureaucracy; trust and deception, and coming up with creative solutions in difficult situations. But most of all, it is a film about the importance of family, and family members helping each other -- which is amazing, since we start out with one of the most dysfunctional families ever portrayed in film. The mother is an overly paranoid woman who has shut herself off from most of the world; and the son is in his 30's yet still lives with his mom, speaks Klingon, and has the looks of Harry Potter. The son and daughter, around the family meal table, act more like 6-year old brats than adults.

It all begins with Emily (Amy Shumer) having an incredibly bad day. In the same day she loses her job, and her boyfriend breaks up with her. Even worse, Emily had just purchased two unrefundable tickets for a romantic adventure with her boyfriend to Ecuador, and no friend is willing to go with her. Enter mom, Linda (Goldie Hawn), who

would ordinarily be too paranoid to go on such a trip and believes it takes 2 years to prepare for any vacation period. Eventually she agrees to go with her daughter to Ecuador since the tickets were UNREFUNDABLE. Thus they embark on a vacation in which they meet lesbian couple, Ruth and Barb (Wanda Sykes and Joan Cusack). Ruth relates how Barb could not speak because she had cut her own tongue out when she left Special Operations for the government so she could not be captured and forced to reveal governmental secrets. Ruth warns the two of them to be careful when visiting certain foreign countries. Emily and Linda promptly ignore that warning and are soon kidnapped and held for \$100,000 ransom. The plot takes many improbable, yet funny, twists and turns and the family ultimately triumphs together.

It was an enjoyable journey to watch this comedic adventure and the movie also features two of my favorite actors from TV's **Daily Show**, Wanda Sykes and Bashir Salahuddin. Enjoy.

The Darn Kids!

By Tim Schreck

I am very excited when May comes around, because for the third year in a row I will be presenting scholarships to 2 of our FFBC award winners at their school gatherings. And I can say without hesitation that this is the best thing I do in my life in Des Moines.

Let's just say that in 1978, at my fabulous Catholic high school awards ceremony, there were no inklings of "who will get the gay scholarship." I know it would not have been me – they would have had to dig deep to get my head out of the sand! As I was belting out our class song, Come Sail Away (Styx baby!!), who knew how pertinent that song would be in my life just a few years later. But no, in 1978, no concept of gay at the awards assembly or baccalaureate mass.

Today, I attend these awards events, and the gay kids ALWAYS seem to have a bleacher section! I might be biased, but it feels like every time I present an FFBC scholarship, the cheers from the crowd are a little more exuberant -- a little more heartfelt. And these young men and women approach the stage fully aware of what they have done to stand out, but also knowing that this is only one element of who they are. They aren't just the "obvious gay kid." They are bold leaders, accomplished scholars, informed activists, and beloved members of their class of 2017! Oh yeah, and gay, lesbian, trans, or supportive of the LGBTQ community. It takes my breath away every time.

This year I'm going to try not to get emotional when I present at the schools (and at our meeting Friday, June 2!). The first time I presented a scholarship two years ago was at a tiny public school in eastern Iowa. There were 23 kids in the graduating class assembled in the gym, boys sat on one side of the podium, girls on the other. The gathering was a potluck with "snacks and desserts." You know I had that lime jello with shredded carrots and sour cream topping! I was soooo nervous to present the award, not just the public-speaking-style of nervous, but the "OMG I am back in Iowa as a gay adult speaking to a high school auditorium about what it means to be an openly gay high school kid"-style of nervous. Come Sail Away indeed!!

And so, we have another group of 8 deserving scholars who will be called to the stage to acknowledge their courage and accomplishments. My favorite line from all of the 2017 applications we read came from a young man who nonchalantly told us, "I didn't come out until I was 9, but I knew when I was 6." Whew.

I fully acknowledge that my participation in this program is part of a long-delayed, cathartic journey for me accepting myself as a gay man IN IOWA. And these young men and women, and their stories, have been an important element of the journey.

To those of you who generously donate to our FFBC scholarship fund, I thank you as one member of our grateful Board of Directors. I hope to see you June 2.

Ponderables

*"You can't con people, at least not for long. *** [I]f you don't deliver the goods, people will eventually catch on."* The Art of the Deal by its purported author, Donald J. Trump.

Some quit due to slow progress, never grasping the fact that slow progress is progress.

Time and tide wait for no man. The Fortunes of Nigel (copyright 1831)

All want love, so give them love. If you can't give them love, give them hope. If you can't give them hope, give them something to do.

They who merit most contempt and hate, do most deserve our pity.

The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.

I thought I saw an eye-doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.

She was only a whisky-maker, but he loved her still.

A rubber-band pistol was confiscated from an algebra class, because it was a weapon of math disruption.

FFBC

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News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa

June 2017

First Friday Break-
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A CHRONICLE OF WAR

By Steve Person

So, did Trump's first 100 days in office seem to you like 100 years? It sure did to me, and we're just in the beginning of this unfathomable odyssey into the rudderless future for our country. I used to believe that our republic could survive any of its chief executives, but I have grave doubts about this one. With contempt for the Constitution and basic human rights, obvious adoration of despots and dictators, and unapologetic ignorance of history, Trump marches on with his disregard for anyone but his family.

Talk about family! Enter the fifteenth century. Dan Jones's history, **The Wars of the Roses: The Fall of the Plantagenets and the Rise of the Tudors**, chronicles the chaotic struggles for power after the death of Henry V. Henry died of dysentery in 1422 and was succeeded by his infant son, the hapless Henry VI. The Plantagenet line, founded by Henry II in 1154, was comprised of members of two noble English families—the Lancasters and the Yorks. The struggle for the Crown between these two families should be reason enough to learn from history that family members do not belong in positions of power for those who are at the top. Trump, of course, ignorant of American history, let alone English, has no idea of the trouble he is fomenting.

It was during the reign of Henry VI that England had two kings simultaneously—Henry VI (a Lancastrian) and Edward IV (a Yorkist). Edward, who ruled effectively until his death in 1483, overthrew Henry, who was incapacitated off and on with mental illness. Although Edward spared Henry for many years, the unfortunate son of Henry V eventually was murdered in The Tower of London in 1471.

Edward IV's successor, Duke of York, became Richard III. Until his unscrupulous theft of the Crown from the minor Edward V, Richard had been a trusted advisor to the late Edward IV. Richard III removed his nephew Edward V and his younger brother to The Tower of London, where they resided for a few months until they disappeared, never to be heard from again. Beware Donald Trump, of your daughter and son-in-law. "Power," as the first Lord Acton asserted, "tends to corrupt, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely."

Unfortunately for Richard III, he had a Lancastrian relative named Henry Tudor, Richard's rival and claimant to the throne. Meeting Henry on the battlefield at Bosworth in 1485, Henry defeated the treacherous Richard III and claimed the throne for himself to become Henry VII and founder of the House of Tudor. The Plantagenet rulers were no more. Beware, Donald, of Ivanka and Jared!

Pedestrian: A guy who knows there are still several gallons of gas in the tank when the gauge points to empty.

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