

RELIGIOUS LEADERS LOSE MORAL FORCE WHEN THEY ENDORSE CANDIDATES

The Rev. Patrick J. Howell
Special to The Seattle Times



Four weeks ago, 33 ministers across the nation mounted their pulpits and endorsed political candidates.

Their protest challenged an amendment to the tax code, passed by Congress in 1954, which sought to prevent non-profit organizations from funneling money and resources to political candidates.

The ministers, however, claimed that they have an obligation to guide their flocks in worldly matters, including politics. One of them said that this "dichotomy between the secular

and sacred" is a myth.

My belief is that religion loses its moral force if it gets embroiled in partisan politics by endorsing candidates, but religion also plays a positive political role by shedding light on the moral foundations for issues that the electorate faces.

The tension between the secular and sacred, between the partisan and prophetic, has ancient roots. In the Christian

world, for instance, Emperor Theodosius in A.D. 387 made Christianity the official state religion (not Constantine, by the way).

And, of course, the bloody wars of religion in 17th-century Europe led many to seek the shelter of the New World where ironically, most of the colonies created their own established churches (Congregational in New England, Anglican in Virginia and Maryland, and so forth).

It was this tortured history of church-state relations that the American founders were trying to avoid when they included in the Bill of Rights: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." They sought to preserve freedom of religion and simultaneously to prevent the establishment of a religion.

The famous metaphor of a

"wall of separation," first enunciated in a letter by Thomas Jefferson in 1802, is notably not a part of the amendment. Rather it's an interpretation, later referenced for the first time by the Supreme Court in 1947.

I don't wish to become embroiled in the legal issues at stake; rather I wish to offer a few principles that seem essential for a religion to remain healthy, independent and prophetic. **First**, the role of the church, synagogue, temple or mosque is to speak truth to power. Religion has a special mission to care for those who are oppressed or excluded. It favors a preferential option for the poor.

Second, religion has both a private and a public function. It brings solace and comfort to the individual, but it also looks to the social, economic and political structures that ensure the dignity of every individual. It advocates structures that create

fairness, justice, genuine freedom and responsibility.

Third, religion should encourage public dialogue, but it should also transcend the divisiveness of partisan sponsorship. For example, in the state of Washington, religion should have a significant public voice on the morality of physician-assisted suicide, but it should assiduously avoid endorsement of either Christine Gregoire or Dino Rossi.

Fourth, citizens should vote with a well-formed conscience. Catholic social teaching, for instance, has put forward the seamless garment of the value of life from conception to death. But voters need prudence to apply these principles in complicated circumstances.

As a recent article in Commonweal, a Catholic journal of opinion, noted, "The real dilemmas we face in life, including political dilemmas, do not neatly

conform to any set of models or list of rules. (Voters need prudence) to apply the principles to complex moral decisions."

In effect, when religious leaders endorse a particular candidate, they are saying to their people, "Your own conscience is not well-enough informed. You are not prudent enough to make your own decision."

In these instances, the fusion of church/state can ultimately lead to the erosion of a well-informed conscience and a loss of genuine religious freedom.

The Rev. Patrick Howell is the rector of the Jesuit community at Seattle University and professor of pastoral theology. Readers may send feedback to faithcolumns@seattletimes.com

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< Teen

FROM B1

POLICE BLAME GANG LIFE FOR HER DEATH

Woman that she said harassed her is in prison

tests to determine what caused her death.

Mountlake Terrace police and divers from the Edmonds Police Department returned to Lake Ballinger on Friday to search for evidence.

Investigators have received several calls about Galindez's death, but "nobody is really that close to telling us what really happened," Hansen said.

Galindez was an active member of a gang called Vatos Locos 13, Hansen said. He said police are looking into whether her death is tied to a harassment complaint she filed with Seattle police earlier this year about a member of rival gang, Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13.

"The [gang] lifestyle is responsible for her death; the risky behavior, criminal activities, their drug use," Hansen said.

Galindez's family said they knew the teen was acquainted with reported gang members, but they didn't know whether she was directly involved in a

gang. The teen's mother said she pulled Galindez out of Ingham High School in North Seattle earlier this year because of gang threats.

Galindez's mother, who asked not to be named out of concern for her family's safety, said that her daughter was recently focusing on school and staying home at night. She said that Galindez was living with her godfather and attending North Seattle Community College to get her high-school-equivalency degree.

According to Seattle police, Galindez reported on May 15 that an Everett woman was trying to get her to join MS-13. The 30-year-old woman, who told police she was a high-ranking member of MS-13, has since been convicted of a drive-by shooting in Snohomish County.



Britney Galindez's body was found in Lake Ballinger.

In that case, Snohomish County prosecutors said the woman was driving in Everett on June 11 when a passenger shot and wounded a man. The woman, who The Seattle Times is not naming because she was never charged with harassing Galindez, is serving two years in prison for the drive-by shooting.

Hansen said that it doesn't appear that woman had anything to do with Galindez's death because she is in prison.

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< Gore

FROM B1

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT STUMPS FOR GREGOIRE

Governor won previous showdown by 133 votes

projected to win the presidential vote here handily.

Gregoire's backers said the reason for the closeness of the race is Rossi's big-money backers, in particular the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW). Rossi and independent groups supporting him had raised \$6 million more than Gregoire and her supporters as of last week.

Seattle attorney Jenny Durkan exhorted the crowd of 1,500 to write checks to counter that effort.

"There is a lot of time between now and Election Day. They are desperate, they are mean and they will do anything to take this race," said Durkan, a close Gregoire adviser who represented the Democrats in the Republican lawsuit over the disputed 2004 election.

Gregoire beat Rossi in that

contest by just 133 votes.

Durkan said that in a Rossi administration, BIAW Executive Vice President Tom McCabe would be "the de facto Department of Ecology head." She asked "How much would you pay not to have him running the Department of Ecology?"

Gregoire said she was inspired by Gore to lead on global warming while the Bush administration has balked.

She boasted the state already has become the fifth-largest producer of wind power and is 40 percent of the way to meeting her goal of reducing carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

Gregoire said the transition away from oil and coal could be a boon for states that get out front.

"It is an opportunity for Washington state to lead and create a new green-collar-job economy," Gregoire said, noting her goal of 25,000 new clean-energy-related jobs.

Tickets for the event went for between \$150 and \$2,500.

Gregoire spokesman Aaron Toso estimated the event raised \$350,000.

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Progress lauded at 29 local schools

OSPI GIVES LEARNING IMPROVEMENT AWARDS

Garfield High among second-time winners

BY LINDA SHAW
Seattle Times education reporter

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction honored 98 Washington schools this week for outstanding academic growth, including 29 in King and Snohomish counties.

This is the second year that OSPI has given Learning Improvement Awards that recognize high-scoring schools as well as those who have made great progress on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

Twenty-one of the schools won for the second year in a row, including Garfield High in Seattle, where Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson announced the awards Wednesday morning.

To be eligible, a school's WASL scores had to exceed the state average in reading and math. OSPI looked only at scores from grades 4, 7 and

10, because those are the only grade levels in which the WASL has been given for the past six years. Winners included schools that score in the top 5 percent at one or more grade levels, plus those that have made great improvement.

The King County winners: Elementary Schools

- Pioneer Elementary (Auburn School District)
- Southwood Elementary (Enumclaw School District)
- Brigadoon Elementary (Federal Way School District)
- Star Lake Elementary (Federal Way School District)
- Cascade Ridge Elementary (Issaquah School District)
- Glenridge Elementary (Kent School District)
- *Martin Sortun Elementary (Kent School District)
- Meridian Elementary (Kent School District)
- *Louisa May Alcott Elementary (Lake Washington School District)
- Audubon Elementary (Lake Washington School District)
- *Horace Mann Elementary (Lake Washington School District)

District)
• Henry David Thoreau Elementary (Lake Washington School District)

- Catharine Blaine K-8 (Seattle School District)
- Briarcrest Elementary (Shoreline School District)
- Glacier Park Elementary (Tahoma School District)
- Tukwila Elementary (Tukwila School District)

Middle Schools

- Madison Middle School (Seattle School District)
- Washington Middle School (Seattle School District)

High Schools

- *Garfield High School (Seattle School District)
- Vashon Island High School (Vashon School District)

Alternative Schools

- Kent Mountain View Academy (Kent School District)
- Salmon Bay School (Seattle School District)

Snohomish County winners:
Elementary Schools

- Sunnycrest Elementary (Lake Stevens School District)
- Glenwood Elementary (Lake Stevens School District)
- Dutch Hill Elementary (Snohomish School District)
- Stanwood Elementary (Stanwood-Camano School District)

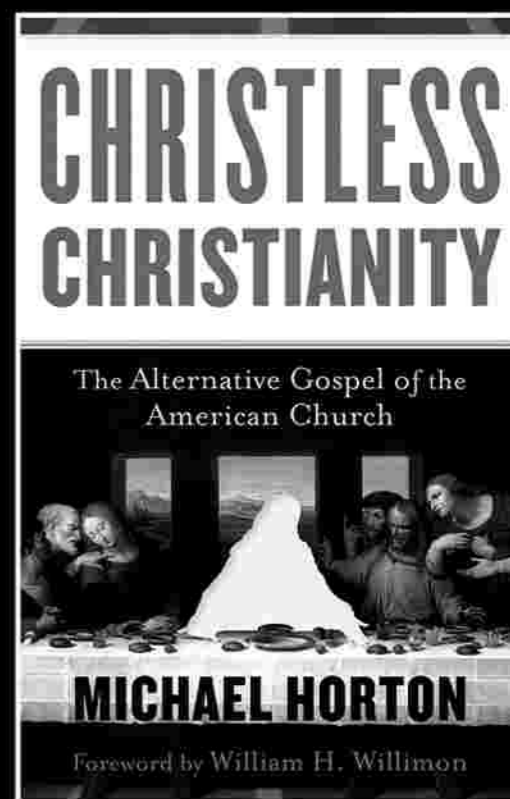
Middle Schools

- Post Middle School (Arington School District)
- Gateway Middle School (Everett School District)
- Heatherwood Middle School (Everett School District)

* Winner for second year in a row.

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