



SECULAR COALITION

FOR

ARIZONA

General Activities
and
51st Legislature
1st Regular Session and
1st Special Session
Wrap-Up Report

January 2013 – June 2013

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Overview

The Fifty-first Legislature First Regular Session convened on January 14, 2013 and adjourned June 14, 2013. This was yet another year full of historical firsts for Secular Coalition for Arizona—and most importantly, the beginning of a decline in the success of theocratic legislation in our state along with the rise of secular values.

As the legislature opened this year, Secular Coalition for Arizona’s Executive Director, Seráh Blain, spoke to a crowd of hundreds of Arizonans who rallied at the State Capitol to ask legislators to stop passing religiously motivated legislation that hurts women. Blain challenged nontheists and progressive people to work together to ensure that the 2013 legislative session was the one in which the War on Women failed.

While the invitation to speak at the opening day rally and to collaborate with many other civil rights organizations in the public discourse on women’s liberty was in and of itself a major accomplishment for SC Arizona, the real victory was when the legislature adjourned—and for the first time in 15 years, not a single bill jeopardizing women’s reproductive healthcare was passed in this state. We were also able to put a stop to: religious legislation aimed at discriminating against the LGBT community; legislation creating opportunities to put into practice prejudice against religious minorities and nonbelievers; bills that would have dramatically expanded religious privilege through property tax exemptions; and legislation that would have moved more public tax dollars into private religious schools.

Last year, as the session adjourned, we knew we had built some relationships and forged important allies; but we also knew that the Religious Right, led by the Center for Arizona Policy (CAP)—one of the most powerful lobby groups in Arizona—would continue to be a formidable opponent, with more resources, more access, and a strong track record of legislative successes. Yet at the adjournment of the legislature *this* year, the Center for Arizona Policy complained of “a disappointing end to what’s been one of the most challenging legislative sessions in memory.” Secular Arizonans and our allies are making a difference!

Our Issues

The Secular Coalition for Arizona actively opposes bills and legislative activities that privilege religion over nonreligion or that use law to force the entire state to conform to one religion's conception of morality. SC Arizona is committed to ending religious intrusion in civil government, particularly where this intrusion causes the marginalization of religious minorities and nonbelievers, or results in discrimination against politically vulnerable groups of people. We support bills that safeguard, strengthen, and rebuild the wall of protection between church and state. Our issues include:

Science-Based Medicine

- Scientific information, rather than religious dogma or theology, is the appropriate basis for determining the validity and efficacy of public health policy and legislative measures pertaining to medical care.
- Healthcare policy must not be based on religious assumptions about human sexuality or human development.
- Government should not endorse, or legitimize, "religious" medical practice including faith-based healing, religious vaccination exemptions, and New Age medicine.

Secular Public Education

- Public policy should ensure fact-based science/sex education.
- Public funds should not be diverted into private religious schools.

Civil Marriage Contracts

- Government-sponsored marriage must be based on secular definitions and must be equal for any consenting adults with legal standing regardless of race, national origin, religion, gender or sexual orientation, etc.
- There should not be religious privilege in who may legally perform marriages or in qualifications to provide any state-required marriage/premarital/divorce counselling.

End-of-Life Choices

- End of life choices, including death with dignity, medically assisted death, etc., must be safeguarded from religious intrusion or theological definitions of "life" or "personhood".

Religious Privilege in Tax Law

- Special property tax exemptions for churches should be eliminated, along with other tax privileges not available to secular charities and civic or social organizations.

Women's Healthcare

- Religious belief is not a valid rationale for denying insurance coverage, medical care, or accurate medical information.
- Women have a right to autonomy in healthcare decision-making, free from religiously motivated restrictions on choice and safe from manipulation based on theological assumptions about human development or the value of genetic material.

Military

- Taxpayer funded state and federal military must serve the beliefs of all service members without privileging one belief over another or discriminating against nontheistic beliefs.

Religious Expression

- Personal religious expression is protected speech under the First Amendment.
- Government-endorsed religious expression (including any state-sponsored Day of Prayer, oaths of office, pledge of allegiance, prayers to open or adjourn any government meetings, religiously based policy, etc.) is a violation of the constitutionally established wall of protection between church and state.

Legislative Affairs

SC Arizona identified and lobbied against 10 bills that represented a threat to secular government, 5 of which were written, conceived, or supported by CAP. Of the bills SC Arizona worked against, 5 went to a full floor vote and only 2 became law. This is a dramatic improvement from the 9 theocratic bills that passed last year. Together with allied individuals and organizations, Secular Coalition for Arizona is changing the landscape of politics in our state! We also supported 9 bills that would have restored secular principles, but none of these were heard in committee.

Secular Coalition for Arizona's Political Advocacy

(SB = Senate Bill; SCR = Senate Concurrent Resolution; HB = House Bill)

Overview of How Bills Progress or Fail

In the Arizona State Legislature, there are many opportunities throughout the legislative process to stop a bill, and SC Arizona works hard to intervene at each step of the process—sometimes behind the scenes, and sometimes publicly with lots of help from our constituency!

After a bill is introduced, the President of the Senate can “Hold” a senate bill by refusing to assign it to review by any standing committees. The Speaker of the House is required to assign all introduced bills to standing committees, but the committee chairs in both the House and Senate can refrain from placing the bills on the agenda—or they can allow debate and testimony on the legislation but refuse to take a vote. These bills are considered to have been “Held in committee.”

If a bill passes through all the committees to which it was assigned, the bill can still be “Held” by the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House, either of whom can choose not to allow a bill to be considered by the entire chamber of their respective bodies. Again, these bill are considered “Held.” When a bill does get to a full vote, it can be voted down—or succeed and then go through the entire process again in the other body.

Once a bill has passed the House and Senate with identical language in both bodies, the bill goes to the Governor, where she can either veto the bill and prevent it from becoming law, or she can sign it into statute.

- Held in the Senate – The President of the Senate did not allow a vote or did not assign the bill to committees.
- Held in the House – The Speaker of the House did not allow a vote.
- Held in committee – The committee chair either refused to schedule the bill for a hearing or did not take a vote, which would have allowed the legislation to move forward.
- Vetoed by Governor Brewer – The Governor rejected the legislation.
- Signed into law by Governor Brewer – The Governor approved the bill and it is now Arizona statute.

Bills Opposed by SC Arizona

SB 1045 “Privacy; Public place; Public accommodation; State preemption; Definitions”

This bill was part of a series of attempts to marginalize transgender Arizonans and dictate religiously rooted conceptions of appropriate gender expression. This particular edition of the “Bathroom Bill” defined gender identity and expression around subjective criteria including appearance and mannerisms—and would have allowed businesses and individuals to use their personal opinions about appropriate gender expression to deny access to public restrooms and other public accommodations for anyone who did not meet those personal standards. This was a dangerous piece of legislation that would have jeopardized basic freedoms for all Arizonans.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy meetings and messaging development with allied organizations • Massive social media campaign along with tabling at public events • Action Alerts distributed; hundreds of constituent and allied emails sent to legislators • Testified in Appropriations Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed Appropriations and Rules • Held in the House

SB 1178 “Exercise of religion; Definition”

This bill would have dramatically expanded the ability of individuals in our state to discriminate against people they do not agree with in the name of religious belief—resulting in increased vulnerability for nonbelievers, the LGBT community, and others on the target list of religionists.

SB 1178 was one of the most dangerous bills introduced this session, and would have made it possible for anyone in our state to use religious exercise as an excuse to deny basic human liberties to vulnerable Arizonans.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy meetings and messaging development with allied organizations • Legal consultations to determine reach of this bill • Meetings with key legislators • Action Alerts distributed; hundreds of emails to legislators from constituents and allies • Phone campaign targeting the House of Representatives, with hundreds of calls made by secular Arizonans asking for a “NO” vote • Social media campaign asking Governor Brewer to veto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed by the legislature • <u>Vetoed by Governor Brewer</u>

SB 1213 “Schools; Science instruction; Requirements”

This bill would have reframed scientific theories into controversies, opening the door for secular, public schools to teach scientific myths—including creationism and intelligent design. At the same time, public schools would have been empowered to label valid scientific theories, such as biological evolution and climate change, as mere opinion—depriving public school students of the essential scientific facts they will need to be successful in facing future challenges, including overpopulation, poverty, global warming, healthcare, etc.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with local and national science education organizations to prepare a strategy should the bill move out of committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SB 1363 “Empowerment scholarship accounts; Expansion; Funding”

This bill expands eligibility and funding for Arizona’s empowerment scholarship account program; the program is essentially a system of vouchers that sends public funds directly to religious schools and homeschools. An earlier version of this bill that was signed into law two years ago is currently in court over the State Constitution’s prohibition on sending public dollars to any religious institutions or being applied to any religious instruction.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Alerts distributed; hundreds of constituent emails sent to legislators and Governor Brewer Comments submitted to committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed by the legislature Signed into law by Governor Brewer

SB 1376 “Reproductive technology”

This seemingly innocuous bill represents a small step by the religiously motivated Center for Arizona Policy toward establishing personhood rights for embryos in Arizona. The bill would have created strict reporting guidelines regarding tracking embryos created through artificial reproductive technology—reporting which is already required by the Center for Disease Control and is publicly available. The bill would have made it a Class 1 Misdemeanor for reproductive endocrinologists to fail to comply with the redundant reporting requirements.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with allied organizations on creating strategy should the bill come to a vote Social media campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held in the Senate

HB 2284 “Schools; Pledge of allegiance; Requirement”

This clearly unconstitutional bill would have removed students’ freedom to choose whether to recite the pledge of allegiance in their public schools. The bill was introduced by religious conservatives, and was largely done as a symbolic “patriotic” expression.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings with key legislators and lawyers to determine bill’s viability and legality Social media campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held in the House

HB 2446 “Property tax; Religious Institution; Exemption”

This bill would have exempted churches from filing for recognition with the IRS and eliminated the requirement for these churches to present a letter of determination to the county assessor in order to qualify for a property tax exemption. Granting this kind of special tax privilege for religious groups is an example of establishing governmental systems of support for churches and endorses religion over nonreligion—a breach of our Constitution’s establishment clause.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbyist meetings with key legislators • Social media campaign • Action Alerts distributed; hundreds of constituent emails sent to legislators • Submitted comments to committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed by the legislature • <u>Vetoed by Governor Brewer</u>

HB 2467 “Constitutional oath; High school graduation”

This bill would have required students to swear an oath to the Constitution—an oath including the words “so help me God”—in order to receive a high school diploma from the state of Arizona.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbyist meetings and email exchanges with bill sponsor to add option to affirm rather than swear the oath • Coordinated with other civil liberties organizations to develop modified language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

HB 2617 “School tuition organizations; Preapproval; Entities”

This bill would have increased the categories of taxpayers who could divert money owed on their state tax bill into Student Tuition Organizations (STOs)—many of which are explicitly religious. STOs shift revenues from secular public schools, which must accept students regardless of religious belief or nonbelief, into private religious schools that are exempt from many anti-discrimination laws (including laws related to religion and disability) and that can teach theology and creationism in lieu science, history, math and other critical subjects.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Alerts distributed; hundreds of constituent and allied emails sent to legislators and Governor Brewer • Comments submitted to committee • Testified in committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Vetoed by Governor Brewer</u>

HB 2645 “Unemployment; Employment definition; Exception”

This bill excludes from the definition of “employment” individuals who work for religious organizations that provide any religious instruction; the bill specifies that such organizations are exempt from unemployment insurance requirements. This is an example of establishing governmental systems of support for religious groups, endorsing religion over nonreligion, and depriving workers at religious organizations of important employment protection.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected with labor organizations to address implications of this bill • Submitted comments to committee • Action Alerts distributed asking Governor Brewer for a veto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed the legislature • Signed into law by Governor Brewer

Bills Supported by SC Arizona

SB 1041 “Civil unions”

This bill was part of a suite of legislation proposed by lawmakers working toward keeping religious definitions of marriage separate from civil marriage contracts. This bill would have created a state sanctioned partnership for couples wishing to have their relationship legally recognized and to be eligible for the same benefits Arizona grants to couples who have state-issued marriage licenses.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with local and national marriage equality organizations on strategy and messaging in the event that this bill moved forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SB 1051 “Schools; Bullying policies; Sexual orientation”

In response to the concerted efforts by religionists to exclude LGBT students from protections offered by anti-bullying policies, this bill would have ensured that all students would be safeguarded from harassment, intimidation, or bullying regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media campaign • Contacted chairs of Senate Health and Human Services Committee (Senator Chester Crandell) and Education (Senator Kimberly Yee) to ask for the bill to be given a hearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SB 1106 “Emergency contraception”

This bill would have ensured that pharmacy employees would be reasonably accommodated by employers in refraining from providing prescriptions that would be contrary to the employee’s religious belief only if such accommodation would not cause undue hardship for the customer. The bill also would have required healthcare professionals to provide rape victims with information about, and access to, emergency contraception.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbyist meetings with key legislators • Social media campaign • Speaking events throughout the state to raise awareness about limitations to contraception access in Arizona 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SB 1164 “Adoption; Considerations; Marital status”

This bill was part of a suite of legislation designed to restore equality to family law in Arizona. Under current statute, married heterosexual couples are given preference over households headed by single adults or LGBT couples in adopting children. This bill would have eliminated that preference and also added language considering the stability of all domestic relationships as an equally relevant consideration to the stability of marital relationships when determining best interests.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media campaign • Coordinated with other allied organizations to develop strategies and messaging should the bill move forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SB 1165 “Marriage; Qualifications”

The bill would have ensured that, under Arizona statute, government-sponsored marriages would be equal for all consenting adults with legal standing; the bill would have eliminated from statute the religiously rooted definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with other allied organizations to develop strategies and messaging should the bill move forward • Lobbyist meetings with key legislators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SB 1304 “Palliative care”

This bill would have required medical professionals to give terminally ill patients comprehensive, medically accurate information about end-of-life choices rather than providing counsel based on religious assumptions or sectarian values around death and dying.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous coordination with other organizations working on end-of-life issues in order to pursue an ongoing strategy for progressively better options around death and dying in Arizona • Lobbyist meetings with key legislators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

SCR 1004 “Marriage; Qualifications”

This resolution would have allowed Arizonans to vote on amending the State Constitution to repeal the religiously motivated definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with other allied organizations to develop strategies and messaging should the resolution move forward • Lobbyist meetings with key legislators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

HB 2437 “Abortion; Viability”

This bill would have restored “fetal viability” as the point at which a healthcare provider may no longer legally perform an abortion, repealing the 20 week abortion ban passed last year. Viability as a criterion is much more soundly rooted in science as opposed to the 20 week ban, which was justified by religious and pseudoscientific assumptions about human development.

Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the courts overturned Arizona’s 20 week abortion ban, this bill fortunately became unnecessary

HB 2478 “Pharmacies; Consumer notification”

This bill would have required pharmacists who refuse to fill certain prescriptions based on religious objections to file this information with the Department of Health Services. The bill also would have required to Department of Health Services to publish this information online.

Actions Taken	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with other allied organizations to develop strategies and messaging should the resolution move forward • Lobbyist meetings with key legislators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in committee

Nontheistic Elected Officials

Part of Secular Coalition for Arizona's mission is to improve the visibility and public perception of nontheists. As part of this mission, we try to encourage secularist legislators with nontheistic worldviews to speak publicly about their nonbelief. This past May, freshman Representative Juan Mendez reached out to SC Arizona when he was scheduled to offer the opening prayer on the floor of the State House of Representatives. As an atheist, Representative Mendez worked with our organization to develop a Secular Humanist invocation rather than a prayer; Mendez also participated in a press conference to express publicly that he is nontheistic, and to encourage other Arizonans to realize they are not alone. In fact, one in five Americans—and a third of adults under 30—is agnostic, atheist, or not affiliated with any religion. By large margins they view religious organizations as too concerned with money and power and too involved in politics.

Representative Mendez's invocation and announcement received international press, and the response has been almost entirely positive. We look forward to facilitating opportunities for other legislators to make similar announcements in the coming year.

Equality in the Military

While most policy concerning military service-members and veterans is developed and legislated at the federal level, SC Arizona remains committed to ensuring that our Arizona nontheistic service-members, veterans, and their families are not discriminated against or denied adequate services based on religious nonbelief. We have been working with members of the veterans caucus and allied organizations to look for creative ways to support nontheists in the military as well as nontheistic veterans. We were very fortunate to have Jason Torpy, President of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers join our Executive Director, Seráh Blain, for a day at the Arizona State Capitol; Torpy and Blain were able to spend time speaking to our legislators about some of the unique challenges faced by military nontheists, and to explore solutions.

Local Government

This year, both the Flagstaff and Phoenix City Councils considered ordinances intended to safeguard equality for LGBT people in these cities' jurisdictions. SC Arizona worked with other allied organizations and our local liaised organizations to ensure these ordinances were considered free of religious bias, and that secular voices were heard during the council meetings. The Center for Arizona Policy had a particularly strong presence at the Phoenix City Council meeting, providing misinformation about transgender Arizonans and using disturbing, unethical fear mongering tactics in an attempt to malign this vulnerable population. Fortunately, through strong, coordinated social media campaigns, Action Alerts, and a unified presence, the nontheistic, interfaith, and LGBT communities were able to make certain council members had accurate, secular information and in both cases, the ordinances passed.

Interfaith-Nontheistic Collaboration

Because many people of faith and faith-based advocacy organizations understand how crucial secular government is to religious freedom, and many of the theocratic laws pushed in Arizona actually thwart free religious exercise for progressive faith groups, we have found many powerful allies in the interfaith community. Our Northern Arizona liaised organizations have been participating in issues advocacy with the Northern Arizona Interfaith Council, and our Executive Director recently joined the board of the Arizona Interfaith Movement. These initiatives help our legislators understand that religiously motivated legislation is not desired by, nor in the best interests of, religious or nonreligious Arizonans.

Inside SC Arizona

Meet Our Team!

Executive Director

This is **Seráh Blain's** second year as the Executive Director of the Secular Coalition for Arizona, where she is a full-time lobbyist for Arizona's atheists, agnostics, Humanists, and other freethinkers at the State Capitol. Her professional background is comprised of political campaign work, issues advocacy, and nonprofit services, including: group facilitation for LGBT teens; small business development for welfare-to-work clients; and HIV-prevention counseling. Blain has been an active member of the Arizona nontheistic community since moving to the state in 2009, and is the co-organizer of the Prescott Freethinkers and Flagstaff Freethinkers. Blain founded the Secular Student Alliance at Prescott College, where she studied Social Ethics; is on the Board of the Arizona Interfaith Movement; has served on the board of the Prescott Pride Center; and is a hospice volunteer. She lives in Flagstaff with her two children and rescued dog.

Director of Development and Marketing

Linda Brown joined SC Arizona as Director of Development and Marketing at the beginning of the 2013 legislative session. She brings with her a depth of experience in non-profit management and advocacy having served most recently as Executive Director for the Arizona Advocacy Network and Foundation where she led a legal effort to overturn voting barriers, spearheaded statewide election protection programs and produced their acclaimed bi-annual guide to Arizona's ballot measures. She currently serves as Vice President of the Arizona Hispanic Community Forum. Prior to coming to Arizona Linda created award-winning marketing and media literacy campaigns as Director of Educational Marketing and Programming for Discovery Networks in Bethesda, Maryland.

Board of Directors

Matt Schoenley, Chair

Matt Schoenley is Chair and former Executive Director of the Secular Coalition for Arizona, a founder of Arizona Coalition of Reason (Arizona CoR), and a past Board member of the Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix. Matt lives in the Phoenix area, is married with three step children, and works as a commercial pilot for a major airline.

Zenaido Quintana, Vice-Chair

Zenaido Quintana is Vice Chair of the Secular Coalition for Arizona; President of the ACLU Arizona; Vice-President of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Greater Phoenix Chapter; is a member of the Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix; and member of the Valley of the Sun Chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. He is a retired corporate executive and currently a small business owner in Phoenix.

Seráh Blain, Secretary

See above Executive Director bio.

Don Lacey, Treasurer

Donald Lacey is Secretary of Secular Coalition for Arizona and dedicated to the advancement of reason. He is the Arizona State Director of American Atheists, the organizer of Tucson Atheists Meetup Group as well as Skeptics of Tucson Meetup Group, and a board member of FreeThought Arizona. Don is a retired United States Air Force officer and a retired Raytheon Missile Systems program manager.

Gil Shapiro, Member-at-Large

Gil Shapiro currently serves on the Board of Directors and as spokesman for FreeThought Arizona (formerly Center for Inquiry of Southern Arizona) in Tucson, is a lecturer on secularism and nontheistic subject matter, and has had dozens of guest opinions published by the Arizona Daily Star and Tucson Citizen, many dealing with the unfair privileging of religion over secularism in our country. Gil has worked professionally as a podiatrist in central Tucson since 1980.

Brian Wallace, Member-at-Large

Brian Wallace is a graduate of Northern Arizona University and currently works as an Electrical Engineer. Except for the 9 years Brian spent in the US Navy, he has lived in Flagstaff since elementary school. He organizes the Flagstaff Freethinkers, a group emphasizing family-friendly community and volunteerism. Brian is a divorced dad raising three children. In addition to serving as a Board Member-at-Large, Brian is also SC Arizona's Community Outreach Director, helping to support, grow, and start nontheistic communities around the state in an effort to organize and mobilize our constituency.

Anne Mardick, Member-at-Large

Anne Mardick is founder and president of the Greater Phoenix Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and serves on their National Advisory Board. She also serves as a member of the Arizona ACLU Board of Directors, is the founder and president of the Valley of the Sun Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation, and is a Life Member of the Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix, the American Humanist Association, the Council for Secular Humanism, the National Center for Science Education, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Anne serves on the board of the Arizona Interfaith Movement and is a Humanist minister.

Rebecca Beltran, Member-at-Large

Rebecca Beltran has been a member of the Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix (HSGP) since 2009 and is also very involved in the nontheistic community on Meetup. She has served as HSGP's facilities use chairperson, game night organizer, and organizer of several special events. She currently serves on the HSGP board as Secretary. Rebecca acted as lead coordinator at SC Arizona's "A Secular Society Worth Saving: The Role of Religion & Secularism n Public Policy - with Richard Dawkins" in February, 2012. Professionally, Rebecca has worked as both staff and faculty in higher education for the past 11 years. Rebecca and her husband, Sergio, share their lives and home with a mini-schnauzer.

Our Growing Coalition

Two years ago, SC Arizona represented ten nontheistic organizations throughout the state, and by last year, we had grown to a coalition of 15. Our goal is to have at least one liaised organization in each Legislative District in our state so we can show our legislators that secular Arizonans are not a marginal group of people, but that we are a significant constituency, we are growing, we are organizing—and we vote! Our Coalition currently consists of the following 19 organizations (* = pending final board vote):

Liaised Nontheistic and Secularist Organizations

- [Americans United for the Separation of Church and State - Phoenix](#)
- [Flagstaff Freethinkers](#)
- [Freedom From Religion Foundation – Valley of the Sun Chapter](#)
- [FreeThought Arizona](#)
- [Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix](#)
- [Lake Havasu City Freethinkers*](#)
- [Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers- AZ Delegation](#)
- [Or Adam Congregation for Humanistic Judaism](#)
- [Phoenix Atheist Meetup Group](#)
- [Prescott Freethinkers](#)
- [Secular Humanist Jewish Circle](#)

- [Secular Student Alliance at Mesa Community College](#)
- [Secular Student Alliance at Northern Arizona University](#)
- [Secular Student Alliance at Prescott College](#)
- [Secular Student Alliance at the University of Arizona*](#)
- [Secular Student Alliance at Yavapai Community College*](#)
- [Sedona/Verde Valley Secular Freethinkers](#)
- [Sierra Vista Freethinkers*](#)
- [Tucson Atheists](#)

SC Arizona in the Community

Public Appearances

SC Arizona spent a lot of time and effort bringing our message of secular government to as broad an audience as possible, speaking to our own liaised organizations, but also allied groups outside our movement in order to grow the constituency of Arizonans who understand secular government is best, regardless of religious belief or nonbelief.

- Seráh Blain speaking, Women Ignited Now Rally at the Arizona State Capitol, Jan. 14, 2013 (Session adjournment).
- Seráh Blain interviewed, Pink Atheist Podcast, Jan. 20, 2013.
- Seráh Blain speaking, Americans United for Separation of Church and State – Greater Phoenix Chapter, Feb. 3, 2013.
- Seráh Blain interviewed, A-News Podcast, Feb. 3, 2013.
- Seráh Blain expert panellist, Arizona State University Social Circles of Knowledge, Religion and Government, Feb. 13, 2013.
- SC Arizona Staff and Board Members tabling, Phoenix Pride, April 6, 2013.
- Seráh Blain speaking, American Association of University Women’s State Conference, April 6, 2013.
- Seráh Blain speaking, Secular Humanist Jewish Circle, April 27, 2013.
- Seráh Blain interviewed, KJACK’s Biased Liberal Media, May 4, 2013.
- Seráh Blain speaking, Saguaro Eastside Democrats, May 20, 2013.
- SC Arizona press conference, Arizona State Capitol, in support of Rep. Juan Mendez’s public announcement that he is a Humanist, May 21, 2013.
- Seráh Blain interviewed, The Voice of Russia – American Edition, May 23, 2013.
- Seráh Blain speaking, Americans United for Separation of Church and State – Greater Phoenix Chapter, May 26, 2013.
- Seráh Blain announcing Rep. Juan Mendez, Secular Student Alliance Las Vegas Conference, June 23, 2013.

Social Media and Communication

- Grew Facebook followers by approximately 250% to 1738.
- Increased our Action Alert list and adopted a powerful new action alert software program to improve our ability to communicate with our supporters, as well as improve constituents' communication with legislators.

Media Coverage

SC Arizona has become a well-known organization amongst political reporters in Arizona, and our organization is often contacted for information or quotes on political issues pertaining to religion and government.

- [Atheist lobby group takes on Christian-based center, The Arizona Republic](#)
- [Opening Day At 2013 Arizona State Legislature, Arizona Community Press](#)
- [Arizona Senate advances bills for religious groups, NECN](#)
- [First Member of Congress Describes Religion as 'None', U.S. News](#)
- [Guest Column: Senate bill is an end run to get religion into Arizona public schools, Arizona Daily Star](#)
- [Arizona House OKs religious-protection measure, AZ Central](#)
- [AZ legislature considers lowering property tax for religious groups, Coolidge Examiner](#)
- [Arizona Senate advances bills for religious groups, AZ Central](#)
- [Proudly atheist lawmaker forgoes prayer for 'secular' address to House, MSN Now Juan Mendez Invokes Carl Sagan While Leading Arizona House Of Representatives Pre-Session Prayer, Huffington Post](#)
- [Ariz. lawmaker comes out as atheist during meeting, USA Today](#)
- [Arizona lawmaker: I'm an atheist, AZ Central](#)
- [Atheist Arizona lawmaker quotes Carl Sagan for House opening prayer, The Raw Story](#)
- [AZ Lawmaker In Charge of House Prayer Tells Colleagues He's an Atheist, Gawker](#)
- [Atheist lawmaker opens Arizona House with godless prayer, Examiner](#)
- [Lawmaker Comes Out as Atheist During House Prayer, Newser](#)
- [Atheist State Lawmaker Quotes Carl Sagan Instead of Doing Prayer Before House Session, Phoenix News Times](#)
- [Tornado survivor to Wolf Blitzer: Sorry, I'm an atheist. I don't have to thank the Lord, Salon](#)
- [Lawmaker announces he's atheist during opening prayer, KRMG](#)
- [State Representative Steve Smith Says *Extra Prayer* to Offset Atheist Colleague's Non-Prayer, Phoenix News Times](#)

- [Arizona House non-prayer sparks Christian re-do, AZ Capitol Times](#)
- [Lawmakers spar over what constitutes prayer, AZ Daily Sun](#)
- [Atheism makes headway with comments by Pope, Arizona lawmaker, KPCC Southern California Public Radio](#)
- [An Atheist Member of the Arizona House of Representatives Delivered a Godless Invocation Today, Patheos](#)
- [State lawmaker opens House session with Carl Sagan quote instead of prayer, The Barking Atheist](#)
- [Thank you, Representative Mendez, Freethought Blogs](#)
- [Atheist lawmaker opens Arizona House with godless prayer, Top News Today](#)
- [Atheist State Lawmaker Quotes Carl Sagan Instead of Doing Prayer Before House Session, Richard Dawkins Foundation for Science and Reason](#)
- [Nice Time! Arizona State Rep. Gives Secular-Humanist Invocation, Has Not Yet Been Stoned, Wonkette](#)

Summary

Secular Coalition for Arizona has unequivocally become a formidable challenger to the entrenched Religious Right, and has been able to make substantive progress this year in stopping damaging, theocratic legislation. Our growth allowed us to hire a full-time Director of Development and Marketing, meaning our Executive Director has had more time to lobby, to build relationships with legislators and other allied organizations, and to develop a long-term strategy to keep the momentum of secularism going strong for years to come. Our liaised groups are growing and thriving, and as the secular constituency becomes larger and more visible, so will our political clout. The tide is turning toward a secular Arizona, in no small part because of the work SC Arizona has done over the past three legislative sessions—and because the support and generosity of secular individuals in our state.