



THE  
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# First Friday News & Views

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## TIME AGAIN FOR PAUL REVERE

by Jonathan Wilson

Enlightened, progressive people have a collection of problems in the political arena. We are organized in various groups with overlapping, but not identical, missions. Predominantly, **One Iowa** has supporters who also support **Planned Parenthood**, and vice versa. The **ACLU** has a predominance of supporters among those who are members of **Americans United For Separation of Church and State**, and who give to One Iowa and Planned Parenthood, and vice versa. Librarians, in their comfortable, soft-soled shoes, are tenacious in opposing censorship and, among them, tend to support individual liberty against government intrusion that is also on the agendas of One Iowa, Planned Parenthood, and the ACLU. **The Interfaith Alliance** counts among its supporters a predominance of those who support One Iowa and those who cling to the notion of church-state separation. **FFBC** and the **NAACP** share a mission enunciated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. **The Iowa State Education Association** (teachers) supports quality public education as a primary focus but, among its members, also is predominantly aligned with unions generally and the plight of people rather than corporations. Supporters of **Justice Not Politics** are likewise kindred spirits. And there is a growing number of gay-welcoming congregations among all faith traditions who also believe in the strict separation of church and state.

I know the mission-overlap phenomenon exists because I'm often made to feel like a common denominator when I receive funding solicitations from every one of them, or see the same folks at their respective fundraising functions. So I know I am not alone.

Organizationally, these groups tend to be fairly independent. Understandably, such groups don't want to share the names of contributors or their membership mailing lists. And they shouldn't. We like not to offend, and we like the *idea* of collaboration. We just haven't figured out how to do it. We don't tend to march in lock-step like our detractors have been more successful doing. We have preferred to strive for unanimity before taking collective action, or go it alone. That, obviously, stifles collaboration among these natural allies and minimizes their political effectiveness.

There is an organizational solution; it is modeled after the familiar story of Paul Revere's midnight ride. We all recall that, having determined the British plans thanks to a signal from a church steeple, Paul Revere made his ride, warned the colonists, and called to arms those willing and able. "We're taking on our oppressors at Lexington and Concord. If you're with us, be there, and come willing to fight."

No one was required to participate and many doubtless chose not to do so for a variety of reasons: they didn't agree with having a revolution in the first place; they didn't feel like fighting that particular night; they thought it would be better to fight the British closer to Pittsburgh or Valley Forge; they couldn't find their musket or their ammunition; they were simply cowardly; whatever. But because of Revere's call to action, a formidable group did assemble at Lexington and Concord, a shot was heard 'round the world, and the rest -- as they say -- is history.

It's time for a Paul Revere Progressives' Project. It's time for getting serious. It's time for some real collaboration in the political arena among like-minded folks.

It's simple enough to organize. Any group, large or small, that shares some element(s) of the progressive "agenda" can participate by naming one representative to a Paul Revere Steering Committee. That group will "meet" on call by telephone to prioritize issues and formulate responsive strategies. By a majority vote, agreement can be achieved on both. That concurrence will be communicated to the cooperating organizations. None will be bound by the action of the

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### CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, April 6, 2012, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by April 4 to [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or 288-2500 by phone.

## Paul Revere (cont.)

Steering Committee or the vote of their respective representatives. But those that do agree will communicate the understood issue and strategy to their respective members/supporters. Like those early patriots, no one will be required or even expected by this minimal participation to *do* anything. The only requirements will be to name a representative to the Paul Revere Steering Committee and *consider* its decisions. Individual supporters will not be required to lift a finger. But, like those colonists, the word will be out there, a plan will be announced, larger numbers will be put onto the proverbial battlefield than any one group could hope to muster, and we can revisit Lexington and Concord with like results.

Some of these organizations are constrained by tax laws; some are not. All would appear to retain the complete prerogative to communicate with their members and supporters *both* the actions of their enemies *and* their friends; the actions of their detractors *and* the actions of the Paul Revere Steering Committee. None of their individual members and supporters would be so constrained.

If you're a part of a progressive organization and it would be amenable to participating in the Paul Revere Progressives' Project, let me know. [Jonathan Wilson@DavisBrownLaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com) (515-288-2500) Together, we can do this.

## Ellen Krug

By Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on Friday morning, March 2, was Ellen Krug, who was introduced by FFBC member Rick Davis as “a writer, a lawyer, and a human.” Ms. Krug spoke of her journey from “male” to “female” and some of the things she’s learned -- and continues to learn -- on that journey.

Ellen, whose columns are regularly published in *ACCESSline*, Iowa’s

LGBT Newspaper, now lives in Minneapolis where she works as executive director of a nonprofit serving the underrepresented. Her autobiography, **Getting to Ellen: Crossing the Great Gender Divide**, will be published later this year. She spoke of her efforts to live as male when she had what looked like the “American Dream” -- a successful 28-year career as a trial lawyer in Cedar Rapids, wife, two daughters, three cars, membership in a country club, etc. Yet there was also that constant “chatter” in her brain, that relentless concern over who she really was.

Krug remembered being acutely aware of Jonathan Wilson as he came out publicly in 1995 while serving on

the Des Moines School Board. She admired his bravery and at the same time told herself that she could “never have that kind of courage.” But then came the life-changing thoughts and emotions in the wake of the September 11 attacks when she finally accepted that she could not go on living the way she was for the rest of her life. Years of therapy and support from wife Lydia (now ex-wife, with whom she is still good friends) resulted in the decision to embark on the road that Krug is still traveling.

“Since I’ve come out as transgendered,” Ellen noted, “people say things to me like, ‘Oh, you must feel like a teenager, starting all over with a new life.’ And I have to admit that I do feel like a teenager again (even to the point of taking acne medicine), but this is not necessarily a good thing. One of the negatives is that I’m learning things all over -- like dating, like being alone, like wondering if I’m cute enough to attract someone other than the guy who’s still there after last call.

“I’ve probably gone on 100 dates of one sort or another since 2004. And just to be sure that all of my bases are covered, I have dated both men and women. One would think that this doubles my chances. But I had never thought that finding a quality, durable relationship would be so difficult. Of course, maybe it’s just me, Princess Ellen.... I recently returned to dating via various computer sites, and I’m encountering the awkward issue of telling suitors that, historically, my plumbing was a bit opposite of what it is now. Liz, my electrologist, and I have been debating about how best to let potential partners know that I’m a ‘T’ in the LGBT alphabet.”

Contact Ellen Krug at [ellenkrug75@gmail.com](mailto:ellenkrug75@gmail.com).

## New Bills Help Iowans with High-risk Healthcare Issues

By Senator Matt McCoy

Stigma against HIV-positive Iowans and access to insurance are issues that are exacerbated by current Iowa law, but one new bill and an amendment I am sponsoring provide much needed change.

A bill I sponsored cleared a Senate subcommittee last week but did not make it out of the standing committee in time for the end of funnel week. This bill proposed changes to modernize and update Iowa's current HIV criminal transmission laws that do not reflect current medical knowledge or treatment. This bill would help HIV positive individuals and encourage openness and support for victims by decreasing criminal penalties for transmission of the disease.

Currently, if people know they are HIV positive and have sex with a partner without informing them, they can be convicted of a felony, face up to 25 years in prison and be placed on the state's sex offender list, regardless of whether it was safe sex or not or whether the virus was actually transmitted or not. The cur-

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# The Artist

Review By Gary Kaufman

**The Artist** is one of the most unusual artistic movies to come around in a long time. It is a silent film about the transition from the silent era. The film opens with the Hollywood premiere of the latest George Valentin movie. At first you just see the film; George is being electrocuted but is refusing to talk to foreign agents. Then the camera pans back and you see the full orchestra that was playing the music to the film – because silent films were never watched in silence. They always were shown with music accompaniment and sound making of some sort. Sometimes the music was written for that particular movie.

Then the camera pans back and you see the entire movie environment – a packed movie palace with all the men wearing tuxedos. Backstage, George and the others who had made the movie, wait. There is a great shot of George looking up, seeing with approval how he is shown on the big screen – bigger than life. The movie ends and there is a nervous pause as they await the reaction from the crowd. There is thunderous applause, it is a hit, and George goes into showmanship mode, appears in front of the screen, and milks the crowd for all the applause that he can. He upstages the leading lady by keeping her off-stage and even bringing his dog out that does a great routine of “playing dead” in response to George using his finger as a make-believe gun. This is the world of George in 1927, but that soon changes.

John Goodman plays Al Zimmer, head of the film studio, and he shows George a film of a silent artist doing Romeo and Juliet as a sound picture. George is laughing, as the voices of a lot of the silent stars did not translate into the sound era very well. But Al Zimmer informs George that he is looking at the future. George doesn't believe it. But he soon discovers the changing times are much to his detriment. Eventually, Al closes down the studio so that his company will be making only sound films from then on. As George realizes that sound is his problem, there is a brilliant portion of the film in which the salt shaker, any jar touched, explodes with sound while George tries to scream and yet no sound comes out. No sound at all. When a feather falls on to the ground with an explosion of sound, George knows he is in trouble.

The lead female role of the film is of Peppy Miller, who was outside the movie theater that was having the premiere. She accidentally went across the police line and finds herself standing next to the star, George Valentin; they are taking photos of George so she hams it up in poses, the last one being Peppy kissing George. Of course, that is the photo that is flashed on the front of the next morning's issue of **Variety**, much to the chagrin of George's wife. George becomes infatuated with Peppy and gives her a beauty mark on her face to help her stand out in the movies. Finally, the day of reckoning

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*For the second year in a row, and while our nation is actually fighting a war, more service members died of suicide than in combat.*

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*Cemeteries are full of indispensable men. Charles de Gaulle*

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comes, and George leaves the motion picture studio to make his own movies – the silent variety. There is a symbolic crossing of George's and Peppy's fate when George meets Peppy as he is going down the stairs from the studio president's office just as Peppy is going up those same stairs. She has signed with the studio and suddenly becomes the new sensation.

The acting in this film is absolutely incredible. The slightest movement or facial expression conveys so much that rarely do they need to put in a placard to explain what has just been said. Although the male lead got the Oscar for his portrayal of George Valentin, I thought the one that really deserved the Oscar was Berenice Bejo, the director's wife. I don't know how anyone could have exceeded her exuberance and the attitude expressed for she was the epitome of Peppy Miller. I say this, however, without having seen Meryl Streep's portrayal of Margaret Thatcher. And, believe it or not, I was very surprised that no one nominated the dog, Uggie, who was a real scene stealer, for best supporting actor.

I will let you discover how the plot twists lead to a triumphant ending. But when I left the theater I noticed this large stand-alone marquee for the movie by the door. It quoted movie reviewers saying that the film was “Pure Unadulterated Joy” and “Absolutely Stunning.” I guess that pretty much sums it up for me. When you see this film, you will be experiencing a rare moment in movie history – don't miss out!

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*When we are alone and quiet we are afraid that something will be whispered in our ear, and so we hate the silence and drug ourselves with social life. F. Nietzsche*

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## BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the April 6 meeting no later than April 4. E-mail [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Dr. Steven Leath, fifteenth president of Iowa State University.

Thanks to Rick Davis for his introduction at the March meeting of Ellen Krug, author of the upcoming memoir, **Getting to Ellen: Crossing the Great Gender Divide**.

A copy of the FFBC Form 990 is available on request.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to **Fred Mount** and **Barry McGriff** for coordinating the book exchange.

# Collectively, We Are a Silly People

By Jonathan Wilson

We purport to be having a serious political debate over “marriage,” and whether or not that historically often-changing institution will be hurt by permitting law-abiding same-sex couples to marry. Whatever else you may think, encouraging people who are gay, or who *think* they are or *think* they may be, to marry unsuspecting straight people, will not bode well for a successful, long-term marriage. I know that from personal experience and so does my former spouse of twenty-five years with whom I share two children and three grandchildren. That there are those who argue otherwise, and that the rest of us even give them the time-of-day, are evidence that we are collectively a silly people.

The fact is there is lots more such evidence. The fact is there are far more important issues we should be discussing and for which we desperately need thoughtful solutions.

We are part of a global economy. There are tectonic economic forces at play in the world as labor and capital seek equilibrium by exportation of manufacturing plants or “importation” of undocumented, but very productive, workers.

We have a fragile economy, made the more so by an even more fragile global economy. More than 8% of a productive workforce in this country alone is unemployed. It’s worse elsewhere.

We are undeniably polluting every aspect of our environment -- air, soil, and water. We live in a sewer, a sewer of our own making. Acquiring property is increasingly risky because of the potential for the later discovery of contamination. We’re giving ourselves cancer and other diseases from ingesting pollutants from known sources like Coke and Pepsi, and others unimaginable.

We are afflicted by a healthcare system that rations care based on the ability to pay and a profit-based insurance system. Such a system *requires* that every claim be examined in the hope of finding a lawful basis for denial. Claim denial will increase profits.

We are in denial of global warming, whatever the cause, and our coastal population centers are at risk from rising sea levels in a time-horizon of merely a decade or two. Thirty bil-lion dollars of property is at risk on the east coast of Florida alone. Some island countries are going to disappear entirely.

We are over-populating the earth at an alarming, accelerating, and unsustainable rate, quickly outstripping readily available energy and natural resources. We are deep-sea drilling for fossil fuels after proving to ourselves how that jeopardizes the oceans. We are building more nuclear power plants despite our experience in Japan, Chernobyl, and Three Mile Island, and the fact that we haven’t figured out what to do with waste that will be radioactive for thousands of years. We’re sending lubricant and explosives deep into bed rock and are what -- surprised when it causes earthquakes?

We have crumbling infrastructure, literally, with interstate highway bridges collapsing into rivers, and countless other bridges *known* as a matter of public record to be unsafe. More figuratively, we eat our seed corn by continuing to underfund quality, public education, and seem mystified by declining outcomes and increasing numbers of “educated” folks who can’t or won’t think critically.

And all the while we allow ourselves to be distracted by silly people who want to debate the pros and cons of gay marriage. It reminds me of my time on the Des Moines School Board; if the issue was the price of green beans for the lunch program, everyone had something to say and the debate took forever. If the issue were the budget of hundreds of millions of dollars, there was almost no discussion.

Ultimately, our only hope will be in free, quality public education. That’s what differentiates us from societies living in mud huts. Even if there were the collective will to support public education, in the near term it would not protect us from potentially crossing a variety of thresholds of “no return.”

The issue of gay marriage should be relegated to the trash heap of trivial concerns that continue to divide the thousands of religions like: how many angels can fit on the head of a pin; should baptism be by sprinkling or emersion; should communion be an exclusive or inclusive sacrament; is Mormonism a Christian faith or a cult; is the creator of all things male or female; is reproduction through surrogacy a good or bad thing (the first recorded example being the birth of Jesus). In a secular society, none of those things matters. Everyone is welcome to believe what they please about them and separate themselves on Sunday mornings from those who disagree, and it matters not a whit.

Those harping on banning gay marriage are truly “fiddling while Rome burns,” and more enlightened folks are, sadly, dancing to the tune.



*Regardless of the form of government, there is ultimately no protection from a mob and mob mentality. Those in its immediate path are doomed. When the mob tries to reach further through the legislature, the courts can only slow it down with Constitutional protections. Ultimately, when a mob acts through the ballot box, it can reach the courts, the Constitution, and any minority group. When that happens, paradoxically, the mob makes its own members potential targets, without protection.*

*We get old when we stop getting things that break down fixed.*

## From the Pastor's Pen:

### The Surprisingly Gay Bible

By Rev. Jonathan Page

Sadly, these days we face a constant stream of negative LGBT rhetoric coming from people who claim to be religious. Especially during this election season when the GOP is valiantly trying to stir its political base, we hear about the dangers of gay marriage and that being gay is against God's intention. Reading these comments from the Christian Right you might have the impression that the Bible is a *Mein Kampf* of anti-gay rhetoric. How disappointed people must be when they open their Bibles to find virtually no mention of gay issues! Intriguingly, a careful reading of certain texts reveals far more support of gays than you might expect.

Most scholars date the book of Leviticus to the sixth century BCE during the so-called Babylonian Captivity. With the leaders of the Israelite community forced into exile, it was a period of intense self-reflection and retrenchment. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a bad thing for gays. The newly codified laws condemned men who sleep with men, marking yet one more time when a minority was scapegoated during hard times (Lev 18:22, 20:13). Interestingly, these texts show that, in the sixth century BCE, people recognized that men were sleeping with other men. Societies do not make laws to prohibit something unless that act is happening.

Thankfully, there are several positive references to gay life in the Hebrew Bible. Lesbians have long embraced the book of Ruth and the love between the two main characters, Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. After Ruth's husband dies tragically, Naomi encourages her to leave and start a new life unburdened by the need to care for Naomi. Yet, Ruth "clung to her" and said, "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" (Ruth 1:14,16-17) What passion! Here are two women "lodging" together and one vowing to kill herself just so she can be buried with her beloved. That is not your standard mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship.

An even more explicit gay relationship is that between Jonathan, the son of Saul, and David, the ancestor of Jesus and prototypical messiah. For Jonathan, it was love at first sight. The text relates, "When David finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul...Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt." (1 Sam 18:1,4) Jonathan then betrays his own father to save David's life. Their gay relationship was apparently well known around Saul's court. At one point, Saul angrily remarked to Jonathan, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Do I not know that

you have chosen the son of Jesse [David] to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?" (1 Sam 20:30) When David and Jonathan were finally forced apart, "they kissed each other, and wept with each other." (1 Sam 20:41) After Jonathan's death in battle, David wrote a song out of grief, which concluded with the line, "greatly loved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." (2 Sam 1:26) I wonder what Bob Vander Plaats says about that line.

For me, it is both happy and sad to read the stories of Ruth and Naomi and of David and Jonathan. I am delighted that the stories of their love made it into the Hebrew Bible in such an explicit way. They show the power of same-sex love through the centuries and have given inspiration to countless Jewish and Christian gays. At the same time, it is sad that our religious leaders keep taking the path of the writers of Leviticus. In a period when their way of life is threatened, they think that if they can stamp out gay love, maybe the world will be right. I can only pray they will change their minds. [editor's note: we have the advantage over our detractors; we just have to change their minds, while they have to change who we are.]

*FFBC member Jonathan Page is senior pastor of the Ames United Church of Christ, 217 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Ames, Iowa. Sunday service at 10:45. He can be reached at [jon@Amesucc.org](mailto:jon@Amesucc.org).*

## New Bills for Iowans... (cont.)

rent law dramatically increases the stigma against HIV positive individuals by singling out HIV and not other deadly infectious diseases, thus discouraging people from getting regularly tested for the virus.

Additionally, an amendment I sponsored passed through committee and would help Iowans with pre-existing medical conditions who cannot obtain health insurance to enter the state-run federal high risk pool with third-party payments. This program has been funded with \$35 million dollars from the federal government and is meant to reduce medical costs in the long-term. The amendment would require the state-run federal high risk pool to request a change in their contract with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services so that they could accept third-party payments.

The amendment requires the state-run federal program to operate transparently and comply with Iowa's sunshine laws, and the board would be changed to include members that would work to help Iowans obtain access to insurance. For example, the new board would have representatives of small businesses and include health care professionals.

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*Once you give hatred, personal ad hominem attacks, racism, and lies, validation as diverse opinion or equivalent political argument, you have lost decency and honesty and truth. You end up with nothing but a world of Limbaughs.* John Cory of **Reader Supported News**

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*If you're in a forest, a tree falls, and you don't hear it; you know you're nobody.*

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# FFBC

*First Friday  
News & Views  
Des Moines, Iowa*

*APRIL 2012*

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## My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

### Free Speech?

By Steve Person

The disaster known as the American process for picking a President, Congress, and other national, state, and local offices is on. There was a time when this process was an admirable endeavor. No more. A right-wing Supreme Court majority made a mockery of the process when it declared that corporations had free speech and could contribute untold amounts of money to candidates as long as the candidates were unaware of the money influx. What a kettle of smelly, dead fish!

The one thing the process had going for it for a long time was the Press. Aside from the talking heads who do not contribute much to the political scene, honest political reporters, such as Bob Schieffer on CBS and David Gregory on NBC, have managed to allow themselves to be reduced to the lowly state of abettors to these charlatans running for office. These reporters ask the tough questions of candidates, and the answers they get skirt the issues and degenerate into the so-called “talking points” that the candidate wants to get across—time and again—ad nauseum. Perhaps the one candidate best at this is Newt Gingrich, whose shrill retorts try to reduce the interviewer to being a member of “the mainstream liberal press,” and Gingrich then goes ahead to formulate his own question and set about regurgitating his prepackaged answer. What rot!

What these well-intentioned political reporters need to do is to grow some sac. As soon as a candidate refuses to give a straight-forward answer to the question asked, the reporter needs to interrupt and say, “Thank you for the interview. Since you refuse to answer the question put to you, the interview is at an end, and you will not be asked to appear on this program again.” That’s all they need to do. Believe me, as soon as these clown candidates—Democrats and Republicans alike—find they no longer have a television audience, their behavior will change.

As for the dirt that these Super Pacs dole out, there is an answer to that, too. First, hit the mute button on the remote control. Then contact the legitimate advertisers who have ads on that television station and let them know that their ads have no effect in your household since the political trash next to their ad is silenced and that the sound will not be restored until regular programming resumes. Once television stations begin to hear from their legitimate advertisers that they no longer want to have their messages silenced, things will change. Also, contact the headquarters of the state Democratic and Republican parties and complain about the content of these spurious political ads. The more people make their voices heard, the more the political parties will listen. Finally, go to the polls and vote, but do not vote for any candidate who is engaging in deceptive advertising. It might be best that you turn in a blank ballot (which in the case for voting for President is OK since your vote does not count anyway—Electoral College electors do not have to vote for the candidate who wins the state, although they generally do).

Cleaning up the electoral system in this country has to be done by the people, not the courts or the political parties or the insult to people’s intelligence known as Talk Radio. Like what the political reporters need to do, so do we as voters—grow some sac!