

School Chaplain Law Hijacks in Partisan Ploy

by Michael G. Maness

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In August of last year, I joined over a hundred other Texas professional chaplains in signing a letter opposing a law that would use school safety funds to employ chaplains.

We saw multiple oddities in the claims, and I say this as a Conservative Evangelical Baptist, and I declare several are hijacking the noble title “chaplain” for partisan and proselyting purposes, even a ploy to sneak preaching under a mask of neutrality.

Led by the Baptist Joint Committee with the Interfaith Alliance and Texas Impact, we professional chaplains concurred: “Because of our training and experience, we know that chaplains are not a replacement for school counselors or safety measures in our public schools, and we urge you to reject this flawed policy option: It is harmful to our public schools and the students and families they serve.”

I ask, what is the NEED? I question the leader who believes chaplains solve all the schools’ problems, seemingly implying there are no honest healthy good-hearted teachers or administrators who truly care about their students.

The letter broached parental consent, which to me cancels the NEED for such a law, and I add that children have no need for school religious instruction that ought to be homegrown. Schools should have no say, no favor, no disfavor, and truly be neutral to a student’s religion that is fostered best from home.

Prison, military, and hospital chaplains facilitate the religion of those with limited free-world access. The school is not either of those, because the child goes home every day.

I have defended “respect of faith” to great lengths in several books, because state-gov favor of one faith actually assaults the authenticity of the very faith favored.

NEED?—the hidden reason for the law, I believe, is to employ chaplains to dominate children with Evangelical faith while lying about neutrality. While few admit that some are bold, often in reprisal to some radical Left that want to prohibit free exercise of faith.

Religion has been used for political purposes for millennia and that will continue as long as someone can get a vote or make money. That civil reality will not be changed with the exposure of shysters. That is also the civil reality for faithful Christians, Catholics, Jews, Muslims—name your jewel—who supremely value “their religion” to high heaven.

The Texas legislature passed Senate Bill 763 last September requiring all schools to vote on the hiring of chaplains. The House version requiring military qualifications failed in conference. Sen. Mayes Middleton (R) authored for the Senate with four co-sponsors, and Rep. Cole Hefner (R) for the House, with six co-sponsors. All were white Republicans, with one woman, and all likely Evangelicals.

The Act modified the Texas Education Code, adding [Chapter 23](#) (three tiny paragraphs), saying a school “may employ ... a chaplain to provide support ... for students.... is not required to be certified” and no registered “sex offender.” The prohibition implied some school might consider such. Yet with that, why did they leave out military specs and a prohibition on proselyting?

Other elements of the Act add “including chaplains” next to “mental health personnel” and “behavioral health services.” Prima facia—really?—they encoded use of safety funds to hire a non-certified anybody next to mental health professionals? **That’s odd.**

Oddity two: in August of 2023, I emailed the Act’s legislators about history. Who lobbied most? One co-sponsor answered, referring me to the author.

Oddity three: National School Chaplains Association President Rocky Malloy was the qualification-neutered bill’s champion, yet his research is Top Secret. In a video, Malloy mentioned a “study” where no one in the school could name most of the children, then claimed his chaplains could. They could not share the study or school’s name for the kid’s sake. Integrity floundered.

Oddity four: I asked for the NSCA’s Form 990s and got the 990s for Mission Generation, so the finances for his subsidiary non-profit are also Top Secret.

Oddity five: the NSCA website claimed it is “the state of Texas’ preferred provider for training and certification of school chaplains,” which text has been removed from the site, perhaps because of the publication of this article and the myriad of others preceding this that decried the absence of basic qualifications. Or maybe, simply trying to address the letter we Texas chaplains signed, the text was removed.

Looking closer, they were “proud to partner with Oral Roberts University” in Oklahoma. That certification webpage later was revised to “proud to collaborate with” and added “a minimum of a two-year degree and 2,000 hours of experience” to qualify for their 8-week course, perhaps because the letter mentioned at the start forced a look at qualifications, something not taken seriously in Austin.

Oh my, tell me that 8-week course was not the reason our legislators excluded military specs! Whether Malloy hid that in Austin or not, he does think 8-weeks sufficient. For \$2,799, the whole tiny shebang includes the required courses of “Active Shooter, Threat Assessment, and Stop the Bleed”—*tada*—NSCA certification.

Oddity six—Malloy’s own words—might be the scariest. His web site advertises “chaplains” solving all school ills, implying all schools are gravely ill and need his chaplain-saviors to fix teachers and prevent student suicide.

In May of 2023, reporting for the *Texas Tribune*, Robert Downen and Brian Lopez, their article, “[Key Supporter of Texas School Chaplain Bill Has Pushed for Evangelism in Schools](#)” (5-19-23), noted how Malloy argued “chaplains in schools could prevent youth violence, teen suicide and teacher burnout.” Rejecting proselyting concerns, “Chaplains ‘are not working to convert people to religion,’ Malloy ... told the Senate Committee on Education. ‘Chaplains have no other agenda other than to be present in relationships, care for individuals and to make sure everybody on campus is seen and heard.’” Downen and Lopez noted how Malloy led Mission Generation chaplains to evangelize for decades and recently changed his website to redirect to NSCA.

Professional chaplains sigh at Malloy’s naïve blather, despising his hijacking “chaplain” for a ghostly “counselor” specter without religion or hiding religion or religious ghosting. I see lying about neutrality to sneak evangelical preaching into public schools, with the above oddities then Malloy’s whole blather becomes a sick model for children.

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Maness’s page on [prison chaplaincy](#) has one of the largest collections of prison chaplaincy docs in the world and the largest in Texas. He has been managing editor of [Testamentum Imperium](#) with its founder Kevaughn Mattis of Trinidad for 20 years, and they have published over 300 articles from scholars around the world, with three compilations in hardcopy: recently, [Can You Hear My Pain Now?](#) (2022) foreword by Gerald McDermott and [Practicality of Grace in Protestant Theology](#) (2021) foreword by Peter Lillback, president of Westminster Theological Seminary. He also compiled and edited for easy reading 366 ocean/sailing metaphors on the Christian life from the first 30 volumes of Spurgeon’s sermons in [Ocean Devotions from the Hold of Charles H. Spurgeon, Master of Mariner Metaphors](#) (2008).

