

Degrading Sex, Government Style

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Every presidential administration in Washington DC does some things that appear stupid in hindsight. It gets caught up in the moment, pandering to this or that political constituency, or reacting too precipitously to some big or newsworthy event. In our 24-hour-news-cycle world, and especially if we're sophisticated news consumers, we simply discount the importance of poor presidential decisions and move on, even as we might grow incrementally more cynical over time about government in general.

The banality, even inevitability of yet another misstep out of Washington, however, shouldn't be allowed to stifle our sense of outrage when it's warranted. Or our energy to pick up a pen or a phone and make a call to the White House to demand the restoration of sense and dignity and even "decency" to our federal government.

The events prompting me to write these words are the series of revelations emerging about the past work of President Obama's "safe schools czar." His formal title is: Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools at the U.S. Department of Education. Czar Kevin Jennings was chosen by President Obama for this current position on the basis of Jennings' past leadership of the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Previously, Jennings had come under some fire from the national media when the news leaked out of an admission from Jennings that during an earlier career as a school administrator, the only advice he offered a 15 or 16 year old boy who told him about an anonymous sexual encounter with a [likely older] man was to "use a condom." There is also the continuing controversy over the books the GLSEN's website recommends for adolescents. These present homosexual sexual encounters as anonymous, degrading, grotesque and sometimes violent. Many describe graphic sexual encounters involving young children.

Today, Jennings is again in the news because of accounts of sex education conferences in Massachusetts in 2000 and 2001 which he helped design while he was president of GLSEN, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Safe Schools Program, and the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. According to the reports (see <http://biggovernment.com/2009/12/08/fistgate-ii-high-school-students-given-fisting-kits-at-kevin-jennings-2001-glsen-conference/>), hundreds of students ages 14-21 were instructed about and given "kits" pertaining to a common homosexual practice called "fisting." Several details add to the full picture regarding Jennings. First, Jennings denied that he knew in advance what conference facilitators would present at the session entitled "What They Didn't Tell You About Queer Sex and Sexuality in Health Class." He said publicly: "We need to make our expectations and guidelines to outside facilitators much more clear. Because we are surprised and



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troubled by some of the accounts we've heard" (see <http://biggovernment.com/2009/12/08/fistgate-ii-high-school-students-given-fisting-kits-at-kevin-jennings-2001-glsen-conference/>). Yet the woman who actually presented the session, and was later let go due to the ensuing scandal, claimed that GLSEN, headed by Jennings, knew in advance the content of the material to be presented.

Second, Jennings' statement of regret implied that the problematic material would not be offered again. Yet the same session was offered, and the same "kits" handed out at the same conference the following year.

Now, Jennings is the Safe Schools Czar of the United States of America. Before asking you (again) to call or write to President Obama to express your view on this matter, several aspects of this mess should be highlighted in order to help you penetrate (and sometimes prevent) some of the most irrational or harmful enterprises launched by your government.

First: Titles can be misleading.

At the United Nations, the words "safe motherhood" in international agreements, have become code for efforts to mandate legal abortion in countries signing onto such agreements. The logic? Abortion (unsafe for children; destructive of motherhood) is claimed to be safer than childbirth for the mother sometimes. Likewise, in the United States, take no meaning from the title "Safe Schools" czar. It means whatever its inventors claim. In the present case, it seems to mean safe from the influence of those opposing the early and degrading sexualization of minor children.

Second: Politics first.

Just in case you ever thought that presidents fill executive agency jobs with people whose resumes indicate their ability to forward the proposals most publicized during a presidential candidate's campaign, and who are presumably popular with the majority of the electorate, stop thinking that. Some (possibly even many) posts are rather filled with people intended to give a "shout out" to those constituencies the president needs to thank, to court or to appease. President Obama is under fire for moving too slowly to champion homosexual rights, in the view of leading voices on the left. The appointment of a "czar" like Kevin Jennings is one way in which President Obama can ensure the influence of homosexual-rights-activists in important places – like our nation's public schools – without the president's having to pass a law, or even hold a Congressional hearing, both of which might generate public attention and opposition. That Jennings' influence in the Department of Education might promote the early or inappropriate sexualization of children is apparently not as important as what Jennings' appointment might do in the way of smoothing relations between President Obama and the Human Rights Campaign.

Third: Look at the government's partners.



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In the case of the 2000 and 2001 sex education workshops sponsored in part by the Massachusetts state education establishment, the state partnered with GLSEN and with Planned Parenthood (known usually as the nations' largest abortion provider), which provided the actual fisting "kits" available to participants. Both of these groups are clearly outside the "mainstream" of adults' thinking and behavior about human sexuality and respect for human life and dignity. When states offer taxpayer dollars to private "partners" for carrying out state programs, the identity of these partners matters a lot. Groups like Planned Parenthood, GLSEN, or another frequent government partner – SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S) -- have little in common with the average American's beliefs about sexual morality. For such groups, the body is a tool, an object to be managed to maximize physical pleasure while minimizing disease and pregnancy. The materials they publish for adolescents can only be described as depressing and dehumanizing. Watchdog groups and citizens are vitally necessary in order to expose these groups, and the government programs and bureaucrats who would partner with them.

One of the outcomes of the current tempest over Kevin Jennings should be his ouster. But surely another should be a demand that the government get out and stay out of the business of instructing our children about human sexuality in ways that degrade them specifically as children, and also as human beings. The phone number for the White House comment line is (202) 456-1111. The address of course is The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500.

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