

Atheist PAC makes first list of political endorsements

Fredreka Schouten USA Today Religion News Service | Dec. 18, 2013

A political action committee that bills itself as a nontheist PAC announced its first slate of endorsements on Tuesday, backing four House candidates and two state lawmakers.

The Freethought Equality Fund said it supports politicians committed to promoting a secular government and protecting the rights of nonbelievers.

In federal races, Reps. Jared Polis, D-Colo.; Rush Holt, D-N.J.; and Bobby Scott, D-Va., secured the group's backing, along with Lee Rogers, a California Democrat challenging GOP Rep. Buck McKeon in next year's congressional elections. The group singled out Polis and Holt for co-sponsoring a House resolution that sought to establish Darwin Day in celebration of evolutionary biologist Charles Darwin's birthday.

"There's a growing number of people who identify as nonreligious," the PAC's coordinator, Bishop McNeill, told *USA Today*. "But it's a group that's been left out of the political process in the past."

The share of Americans without any religious affiliation has grown to nearly 20 percent of the population, according to a Pew Research Center poll released last year.

The Freethought Equality Fund plans to back 15 to 20 candidates. It formally launched in May. The group shows no fundraising activity on its most recent Federal Election Commission filings, but McNeill said contributions are coming in, and the group soon will ramp up fundraising efforts.

The PAC intends to direct political contributions and grassroots help to its endorsed candidates, he said.

[Fredreka Schouten writes for *USA Today*.]

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