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ARIZONA'S VOICE FOR
SECULAR GOVERNMENT

SECULAR SUMMIT 2019 ROUNDUP

**This year's Secular Summit was a success!
For those who couldn't make it, we've rounded up
a few highlights:**

Keynote:

Our honored guest **Mandisa Thomas**, founder of Black Nonbelievers, gave an important talk about numerous topics relating to organizing with people of color within the secular movement, including:

- The importance of minority visibility as a form of activism
- How diversity and inclusion problems cannot be solved with one-time efforts
- Overcoming issues of tone-deafness, and learning how issues affecting secular communities of color affect all within our movement



- The importance of focusing on the people within the secular movement as much as our core issues

Mandisa reminded us that activism isn't just what we do, it's how we do it. We look forward to taking these messages to heart as we move forward as a community.



Aid in Dying:

Dr. Dwight Moore of End of Life Arizona explained how medical aid in dying works, and the ways it differs from the traumatic act of suicide.

Among other points, Dr. Moore illustrated how wills and contracts are not voided by

choosing aid in dying, and how the program's numerous safeguards have resulted in zero instances of abuse over 8 years.

Those interested in supporting death with dignity are encouraged to tell their doctors, congresspeople, and friends by way of holding house parties to share information about the subject. Contact [Compassion and Choices](#) for more information.

Legal updates:

Legal Director Dianne Post described how Secular AZ's church-and-state complaints have doubled since last year (27 overall), nearly half of which were discovered through records requests to public schools.

A few of the most egregious violations have included a religiously-biased government job ad, numerous incidents of in-school proselytizing, and a "Women for Trump" campaign event at a Mesa church (featuring Kelli Ward and Jan Brewer).

Dianne also highlighted



numerous secular legal victories, including changing the nature of the controversial "[Pray With Police](#)" event, and ensuring ACCCHS pays for transportation to secular addiction recovery programs as well as 12-Step meetings.



Legislative updates:

Director of Government Affairs Tory Roberg and **Senator Juan Mendez (D-26)** kept us up to date on the state of the Legislature. (Surprise! It's highly partisan.)

This year, **we addressed our community's need to back**

secular-supporting candidates in competitive districts.

Specifically, this means LD6 (where there is an open seat), LD17, and LD20.

Tory also brought us up to speed on how comprehensive sex education is shaping up to be a battleground issue at the Legislature this year.



Other highlights:

Mark Niski was honored with the Secular Star for his work founding Kingman Freethinkers, and jovially recounted his experiences starting the conservative area's first-ever secular group.

Save Our Schools Arizona presented on their work fighting against school vouchers,

explaining how voucher programs have been incrementally expanded since their introduction with the apparent goal of demolishing the public school system altogether. They also illuminated us on how a large percentage of vouchers directly fund religious schools.

The Handmaids' Resistance of Phoenix (above) made a surprise in-wardrobe visit, talking about the dangerous work they perform as demonstrators for reproductive autonomy.

**Thank you to our hosts for making this year's
summit a success:**

Matt Schoenley - *superhost*

Joe Blankenship

Mike Franklin

Ellen Gittleman

Jerry Karches

John Lynn

Dianne Post

Diane & Steve Uhl

Jennifer White

Local and national news:

[Arizona Rep. Anthony Kern blames the absence of God, not guns,
for mass shootings](#)

[Dem Calls for Kern to Resign as Rules Chair Over Anti-LGBTQ
Comments](#)

[A heartbreaking Supreme Court case could be a huge win for the
Christian right](#)

[Jacqueline Smith: The path to more inclusive holiday displays](#)

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