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RET News October 2016 CE



## Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

October 2016

### First Sunday Meeting

**October 2 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex**

Shifting Context: How Innocuous Legislation Becomes Controversial, Without Changing a Word

Michael James Ashworth, currently in the UT Master's of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) Program will give this talk based on a paper he submitted in August. It is based on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

This is a topic that should be of great interest to Secularists.

### The RET Skeptic Book Club

**October 9 Sunday 2:00 – 4:00 pm**

**Location: Books-A-Million at 8513 Kingston Pike, Knoxville.**

The book for our October meeting is “The Right Way to Lose a War: America in an Age of Unwinnable Conflicts” by Dominic Tierney

For nearly a century, up until the end of World War II in 1945, America enjoyed a Golden Age of decisive military triumphs. And then suddenly, we stopped winning wars. The decades since have been a Dark Age of failures and stalemates-in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan-exposing our inability to change course after battlefield setbacks. In this provocative book, award-winning scholar Dominic Tierney reveals how the United States has struggled to adapt to the new era of intractable guerrilla conflicts. As a result, most major American wars have turned into military fiascos. And when battlefield disaster strikes, Washington is unable to disengage from the quagmire, with grave consequences for thousands of U.S. troops and our allies. Drawing on interviews with dozens of top generals and policymakers, Tierney shows how we can use three key steps—surge, talk, and leave-to stem the tide of losses and withdraw from unsuccessful campaigns without compromising our core values and interests. Weaving together compelling stories of military catastrophe and heroism, this is an unprecedented, timely, and essential guidebook for our new era of unwinnable conflicts. The Right Way to Lose a War illuminates not only how Washington can handle the toughest crisis of all battlefield failure—but also how America can once again return to the path of victory.

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### **RET Third Sunday Meeting**

**October 16 Sunday 10:30 a.m.**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium**

## **“The Island of Knowledge: The Limits of Science & the Search for Meaning” by Professor Marcelo Gleiser**

A DVD presentation from the Skeptics Society Distinguished Lecture Series.

Do all questions have answers? How much can we know about the world? Is there such a thing as an ultimate truth? To be human is to want to know, but what we are able to observe is only a tiny portion of what's “out there.” In “[The Island of Knowledge](#)”, Dartmouth College astronomer and physicist Dr. Marcelo Gleiser traces our search for answers to the most fundamental questions of existence. In so doing he reaches a provocative conclusion: science, the main tool we use to find answers, is fundamentally limited. These limits to our knowledge arise both from our tools of exploration and from the nature of physical reality: the speed of light, the uncertainty principle, the impossibility of seeing beyond the cosmic horizon, the incompleteness theorem, and our own limitations as an intelligent species. Recognizing limits in this way, Gleiser argues, is not a deterrent to progress or a surrendering to religion. Rather, it frees us to question the meaning and nature of the universe while affirming the central role of life and ourselves in it. Science can and must go on, but recognizing its limits reveals its true mission: to know the universe is to know ourselves.

[Get Directions](#)

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### **RET Reflections Meeting**

**October 24 Sunday 2:00 p.m.**

**At Steve and Carol Tokay's** 8905 Garrison Drive, Knoxville TN 37913-2416 (865) 691-6816

Discussion and Potluck

Topic: Death is inevitable -- Suffering need not be

*You cannot "take" something that is freely given; you can only receive it. If I ask you to help me end my life, you are not "taking" it, you are only allowing it to be given, and there is certainly no malice. You are merely honoring my request to help me end my suffering.*

*Sometimes the body gets damaged and is unable to shut down on its own. Just as people in a bad car accident must be freed from their metal prison using the Jaws of Life, you may need help being freed from a body that has become a prison. You have the right to physically die because you have the right to be free.*

Rev. Kevin Bradley, MDiv Minister, United Church of Christ

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### **RET Adopt -a-Highway**

**October 8 Saturday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Meet at the Lovell Road exit Burger King

Wear sturdy shoes and bring gloves. A picker-upper is also useful.

Before volunteering you must have watched the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

BEFORE volunteering you must have watched the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAnxSIUP7eY&feature=youtu.be>

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## **Secular Invocation at Oak Ridge      Second Attempt to be heard**

**October 10 at 7:00 PM OakRidge City Council.**

200 South Tulane Ave., Oak Ridge Tennessee.

Aleta Ledendecker will be giving the invocation.

The first secular invocation was met with a sad display of prejudice and rudeness against the secular community by the City Council. We need as many people to come out in support as possible.

Please come and support our right to secular invocations.

This is on Columbus Day.

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## **RET Skeptics Book Club - New Books List**

- 1. *November 13, 2016: The Invention of the Jewish People* by Shlomo Sand.
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- 2. *December 11, 2016: Don't Sleep, There are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle*
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- 3. [January 8, 2017: Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue](#)
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- 4. *February 12, 2017: The Utility Of Force: The Art Of War In The Modern World* by Rupert Smith.
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- 5. *March 12, 2017: White Trash: the 400 year Untold History of Class in America* by Nancy Isenberg.
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- 6. [April 9, 2017: BEING MORTAL: Medicine and What Matters in the End](#) by Atul Gawande.
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- 7. *May 14, 2017: The Serengeti Rules: The Quest to Discover How Life Works and Why It Matters* by Sean B. Carroll.
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- 8. *June 11, 2017: All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation* by Rebecca Traister.
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- 9. *July 9, 2017: Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business* by Rana Foroohar .

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### **Other Activities in the area**

East Tennessee Freedom From Religion Foundation Chapter

Meets on the 3rd Wednesdays of each month      October 19, 7:00 PM      Earth Fare Turkey Creek

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### **RET/ASK Freethought Forum TV**

**Tuesdays    5:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Note change: Due to Knoxville Beer Board Meeting changes there will be no RETV on varying Tuesday once a month.**

Freethought Forum TV is looking for people to be on the show. Contact Larry Rhodes or Lee Erickson if you are interested.

Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12 Charter Channel 6 Free streaming on [ctvknox.org](http://ctvknox.org).

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville Meet-up at Barley's on Jackson Avenue in Knoxville's Old City. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rh at [larryr@usit.net](mailto:larryr@usit.net) or Lee Erickson at [forresterickson@comcast.net](mailto:forresterickson@comcast.net).

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## **Sunday Assembly Knoxville** Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More

### **October 23 - Rituals**

Location: The International at 940 Blackstock Ave., Knoxville, TN

Time: 10:30 AM

For other SA activities go to <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com> and click on "Calendar."

Email: [saknoxville@gmail.com](mailto:saknoxville@gmail.com)

Website: <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/595906073848559>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/>

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### **Future Activities**

## **Freedom From Religion National Convention**

Pittsburg, PA

October 7-9

The national convention, hosted at the Wyndham Grand hotel in downtown Pittsburgh, will include such notable speakers as cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett, award-winning author Susan Jacoby, biology professor Jerry Coyne and theoretical physicist and author Lawrence Krauss, who will receive FFRF's annual "Emperor Has No Clothes" award. Aleta Ledendecker will be receiving a "Nothing Fails Like Prayer" award for her role in giving invocations.

<https://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>

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### **American Humanist Association 76th Annual Conference**

Charleston, South Carolina June 8-11, 2017

[conference.americanhumanist.org](http://conference.americanhumanist.org)

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### **Help Needed:**

Please contact us at [info@rationalists.org](mailto:info@rationalists.org).

**Willing to serve on the board? Please join in keeping RET active and relevant.**

Anyone who has fundraising and/or PR experience and is willing to help RET?

Anyone willing to give secular invocations at public government meetings?

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### **Member News:**

Chuck & Joan Omarzu can no longer drive to meetings. They would appreciate anyone who can visit or call. (865-657-5027)

(Please contact me at [ledendecker@att.net](mailto:ledendecker@att.net) if you have any relevant news about RET members that they agree to share.)

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### **Trump promises (on numerous occasions) to repeal the law that prohibits pulpit politicking.**

He has become the first presidential candidate to openly advocate for the repeal of the "Johnson Amendment." Jerry Falwell, Jr. was very pleased stating: "After 30 years of so-called conservative leaders who have been elected by evangelicals, none of them thought to advocate for the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, giving the evangelical leaders political free speech. ...He (Trump) thinks it is going to be a revolution in the Christian world."

Related notes:

This has become part of the official Republican Platform.

Trump has also claimed that he has been persecuted by the IRS for his "strong Christ beliefs."

Congress is considering a bill to undermine this portion of the State/Church separation wall, a rider to appropriations bill H.R. 5485.

Americans United is circulating a petition calling on the IRS to enforce the non-politicking rule more aggressively.

Go to: [projectfairplay.squarespace.com/petition](http://projectfairplay.squarespace.com/petition).

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