
PANViews



*Newsletter of PA Nonbelievers, Inc., affiliated with American Atheists,
Atheist Alliance International and the Council for Secular Humanism and the Secular
Student Alliance*

Visit us on the web at panonbelievers.org, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/PennsylvaniaNonbelievers
Follow us on Bluesky @panon-believers.bsky.social or find us on Meetup www.meetup.com/pennsylvania-nonbelievers

President's Report

Josh CruverKibi

PA Nonbelievers will be starting our 2025 tabling season in two weeks. It is our primary educational and activist outreach. If you are interested in participating in any of these tabling events, please let us know. We have struggled with getting consistent volunteer commitment and participation from members since COVID, so we would really appreciate you letting us know if you will volunteer for an event. There will be a primary person in charge of organizing, scheduling, setting up, and breaking down each of these events. When you let us know which tabling event you would like to help with, the coordinator for the event will get in contact with you to coordinate volunteering. We will also post specific details for our upcoming tabling events on our website, Meetup, Facebook, Bluesky, and Discord.

There has been a resurgence in blindly followed ideas and beliefs as access to digital media has increased over the last fifteen years, with fairly consequential results. We debate flat earthers at tabling events more than I thought possible and there appears to be an eerily disassociated reaction in the general population to the multiple attempts and successful deconstructions of federal agencies, programs, along with civil rights. I guess it is understandable that any one person would feel overwhelmed in trying to understand the Heritage Foundations blitzkrieg deconstruction of the United States government.

The strategy of intentional overwhelm, especially in the digital age, makes it all the more essential that individuals pick and limit themselves to a narrow group of volunteering and educational activities. Tabling in our communities is one of the many small roles that PA Nonbelievers can play in creating cognitive dissonance for blindly followed beliefs. Cognitive dissonance is the perception that two or more ideas do not work together, which makes a person feel compelled to modify their thoughts or behaviors to reduce the tension between ideas. Cognitive dissonance is typically not felt unless a person is exposed to contrary ideas.

Many of us atheists and humanists first felt this cognitive dissonance while being exposed to religious ideas and struggling to ignore logic and facts that often ran contrary to those ideas. Cognitive dissonance is more commonly understood as doubt. That same cognitive dissonance, created by PAN tabling in our communities, has changed perceptions of the secular community, just as PRIDE events have helped to change societies views of the LGBTQ community. Cognitive dissonance and exposure are necessary agents for social change.

However, there are many rigid and absolutistic thinkers in society who struggle with having two, let alone multiple, contrary ideas in their mind at the same time. Our society is now so digitally saturated with ideas, critical thinking skills are becoming more essential than ever to be able to keep information, opinions, and facts straight. This would seem hard, if not impossible, for even a practiced critical thinker. Having some level of nuance on any one idea, if we are being honest with ourselves, would take continuous intentional conscious effort and engagement while being digitally bombarded.

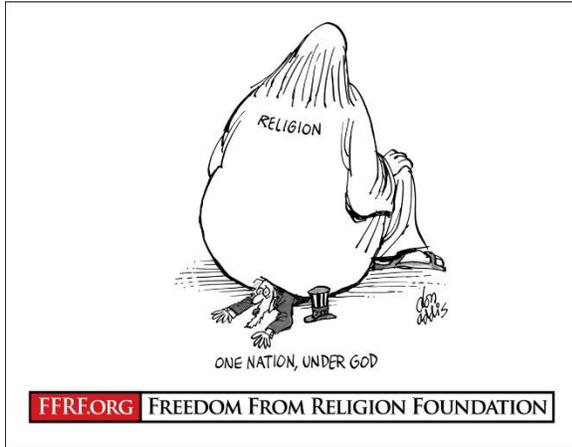
It makes me wonder how intentional the Heritage Foundations project 2025 goals are for creating chaos, confusion, disengagement, and to remove all ideas and words of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Are their goals of removing and changing words and ideas of diversity from community, government, and historical sites a way of decreasing our society's cognitive dissonance? Can rigid religious beliefs survive or evolve in a society that allows diversity or the potential to perceive cognitive dissonance?

PA Nonbeliever Tabling Schedule:

- Dillsburg Picklefest, 5/10/25 Saturday 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- York Pride, 6/14/25 Saturday 11:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Jubilee Day, Mechanicsburg, 6/19/25 Thursday 10:00 am -9:00 pm
- Lancaster Pride, 6/28/25 Saturday 12:00 pm – 7:00 pm
- Harrisburg Pride, 7/26/25 Saturday 12:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- Red Lion Street Fair, 8/9/25 Saturday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Adams County Heritage Festival, 9/21/25 Saturday 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- Pumpkin Fest, Enola, 10/11/25 Saturday 9:30am – 5:00 pm, & 10/12/25 Sunday 11:00 am – 5:00 pm



Atheist News in Pennsylvania– The Nation – The World!



Fighting Anti-Christian Bias!

State Department employees are on the lookout for examples of coworkers who display anti-Christian bias, because of a Trump executive order supporting Christians working in the federal government.

According to politico.com, a cable signed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced this directive to employees throughout the state department. In recent days, Attorney General Pam Bondi and Veterans' Affairs Secretary Doug Collins, have joined in the fun, sending similar directives to government employees under their purview.

All of the communications require employees to give details of the purported bias, including names, dates, locations. Some State Department employees were concerned that the directive assumed anti-Christian bias exists. What about other religions, some employees wondered. The State Department clarified that while Trump's executive order specified Christianity, it is looking for examples of any anti-religious bias.

Bondi held a meeting of the Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias at which several Christians described times when the Biden administration discriminated against them, as reported in the Department of Justice's website, www.justice.gov/opa/pr. Michael Farris, founding president of Patrick Henry College described how Cornerstone Church is being investigated by the IRS for violating the Johnson Amendment. (The Johnson Amendment prohibits all 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates.) Dr. Scott Hicks, provost and chief academic officer, Liberty University complained about how Liberty and Grand Canyon University were fined by the Biden administration for, he said, their Christian worldview. (Liberty was fined for its failure to report crimes, related to its sex scandal; Grand Canyon, for lying to students about the actual cost of getting a post-graduate degree.)

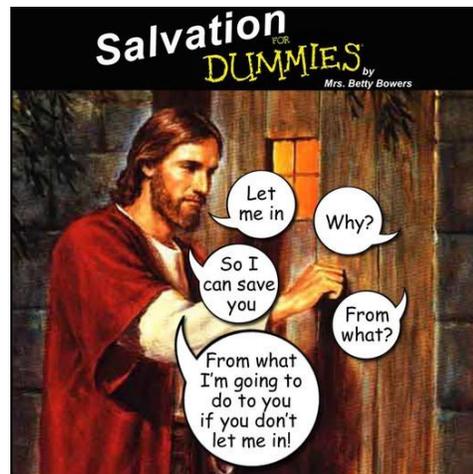
Rubio had several examples. He claimed that some Christian Foreign Service officers were being harassed because they homeschooled their children. In addition, he also brought up people who were stigmatized for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine. There were complaints about employees being forced to push LGTB "agendas" even in countries where it went against the prevailing religion. Rubio claimed that religious overtones of Christian holidays were removed at American embassies, while other religious holidays, such as Eid and Ramadan, were celebrated using their proper names and greetings (is this the "Merry Christmas" fight?)

There were many more examples, often involving fights about LGTB issues, and the tax classification of religious organizations.

Abuse Scandal Doesn't Go Away

According to The Philadelphia Inquirer, 7 years ago New Jersey promised to investigate years of abuse by Catholic priests. A hotline was established, and hundreds of people used it. But nothing happened. Victims were not called before a grand jury, and the NJ attorney general never issued a report.

Why not? The article states the diocese of Camden has worked in secret to block any investigation. The documents in this case were originally sealed, but the NJ Supreme Court unsealed them in March.



The diocese claims that the law does not allow for the public reporting of allegations against private institutions that can't be prosecuted because of the statute of limitations, or issues with evidence.

According to the diocese, state law is “abundantly clear: a grand jury is not authorized to return a presentment against the Roman Catholic Church relating to decades-old allegations of clergy abuse.” (A “presentment” is a formal presentation of evidence to a court.) So far, two courts have agreed.

The diocese's attorney piously argues that this is a legal argument; they don't oppose a grand jury investigation of crimes by priests. No, no, the attorney general plans to issue a larger report, including cases that can't be charged, and the diocese wants to wait for that.

Given that the Camden diocese has a disgraceful track record on priestly abuse, including a 2022 bankruptcy settlement in which it paid \$87.5 million to abused people, victims are angry that the church is trying to stop an investigation.

The NJ Supreme Court will hear from both sides about whether the attorney general's office should be allowed to convene a grand jury, and if the grand jury will be permitted to produce a presentment after it hears testimony.

The diocese of course claims that they “recognize the serious, lifelong harms suffered by the victims of abuse by clergy members.” It also claims that the problem is in the past because of an agreement between the state and Catholic dioceses requiring the church to report allegations of abuse to county prosecutors. “The State has no evidence that clergy sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church is a contemporary problem, because it is not. For 23 years, the problem of clergy sexual abuse has ceased to exist in the Diocese.” It further says a presentment is unnecessary; everybody knows all about the clergy abuse already.

Two lower courts have agreed that the state cannot issue a presentment against the church, so that there is no point in convening a grand jury. The Supreme Court agreed to hear the state's appeal, and ordered all the documents, which had been secret, to be released.

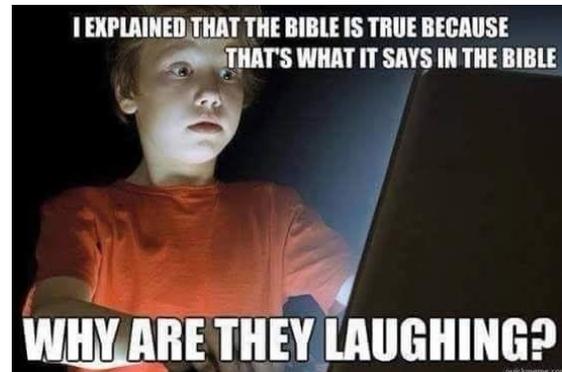
The End of the “Confession” Exemption?

The Catholic Church holds that priests cannot reveal any guilty admission made during the sacrament of Penance, or Confession. Courts honor this rule, which has made it the focal point of many TV shows and movies, among other things.

According to washingtonstatestandard.com, the state of Washington is poised to change that, in cases of child abuse or neglect. Almost two-thirds of the state House approved a state Senate bill that would make all religious leaders mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect regardless of how or where they received the information.

Most states already make clergy mandatory reporters but exempt anything said in confession. (Pennsylvania is one of those states and also exempts anything said in a counseling session with a clergy member.) The Washington bill would make clergy mandatory reporters, but it would not require clergy members to testify in court or in any criminal proceeding. It defines “member of the clergy” as a “regularly licensed, accredited, or ordained minister, priest, rabbi, imam, elder, or similarly positioned religious or spiritual leader.”

The Washington State Catholic Conference opposed the law, because, it says, it would force priests to break the seal of confession. Republican claimed that the change might actually cause more problems, because abusers would no longer be able to honestly talk to someone about what they had done. “It will drive these conversations underground. No children will be protected,” according to Rep. Hunter Abell.



The law awaits the signature of Gov. Bob Ferguson to go into effect.

Catholic Charities Tax Exemption

Catholic Charities and the state of Wisconsin appeared before the Supreme Court because Wisconsin refuses to exempt the organization from participating in the state’s mandatory unemployment system.

Npr.org reports that several members of the Supreme Court were clearly dubious about Wisconsin’s requirement that Catholic Charities participate in the system. The suit was brought by one Wisconsin chapter of Catholic Charities, claiming that as a religious organization it should be able to opt out of the state unemployment system and participate in the cheaper system provided by the church.

Wisconsin states that Catholic Charities is no different than other non-profits such as Catholic hospitals, which do participate in the state unemployment system. Catholic Charities argued that it is entitled to a religious exemption because its mission is to carry out the gospel. The article states that if Catholic Charities wins, all of the Catholic Charities organizations will leave the state system, in Wisconsin and in 46 other states. This could seriously undercut the unemployment compensation programs nationwide.

According to scotusblog.com, Wisconsin’s assistant attorney general, Colin Roth, told the court that Wisconsin’s unemployment tax exemption was designed to keep the state from having to decide “whether employees complied with religious doctrine when churches and religious institutions fire their employees, who then file for unemployment benefits.” Justice Clarence Thomas asked Roth if Catholic Charities would receive the exemption if it were incorporated as part of the Catholic Church and not maintained as a separate nonprofit. Roth said that it would, which lead Thomas to ask why, if the function is the same? Chief Justice John Roberts asked what would be the simplest thing Catholic Charities could do to qualify for the religious exemption. Roth said that requiring people to be Catholic, or convert to Catholicism, would work.

A decision in the case is expected by late June.

Beware of any Christian movement that acts as though the world is full of enemies to be destroyed rather than full of neighbors to be loved.

Beware of any Christian movement that demands the government be an instrument of God's wrath but never a source of God's mercy, generosity, or compassion.

—Rev. Benjamin R. Cremer

Johnson Amendment Under Attack

The Congressional Freethought Caucus, freethoughtcaucus-huffman.house.gov, is sounding the alarm about a bill to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

As reported earlier, the Johnson Amendment forbids organizations that are tax exempt under Sec. 503(c) (3) from endorsing or opposing political candidates. Rep. Mark Harris of North Carolina and Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma have proposed a bill to repeal it.

The Freethought Caucus explains that the Johnson Amendment, in effect for more than 50 years, has protected the “separation of church and state as well as the integrity of both religious institutions and the political process.”

Among other things, the Caucus points out that repealing the amendment would allow people to launder contributions and receive a tax exemption for which other campaign contributions would not qualify. It also notes that letting churches campaign could cause serious conflicts within churches.

The IRS has recently issued guidelines that permit churches to engage in political activities, including voter registration drives, educational activities, even hosting political forums, as long as they don't endorse a candidate

Evolution, the Atheist Religion

A federal district court in Indiana recently decided that just because atheists support the theory of evolution doesn't make evolution the atheist religion.

According to deseret.com, some Christian parents had sued to require that Indiana change its state standard for science education and ban books discussing evolution out of public schools. The plaintiffs made the novel argument that teaching evolution promoted the atheist religion, thus violating the First Amendment. The lawsuit states, “Because the atheistic Theory of Evolution specifically attacks the Judeo-Christian origin story it has the purpose and effect of advancing the atheist religion.”

Federal District Court Judge Sarah Evans Barker disagreed. In her decision she wrote, “Despite Plaintiffs' assertions to the contrary, the purported similarities between evolution and atheism do not render the teaching of evolution in public schools violative of the Establishment Clause, which has never been understood to prohibit government conduct that incidentally 'coincide(s) or harmonize(s) with the tenets of some or all religions.”

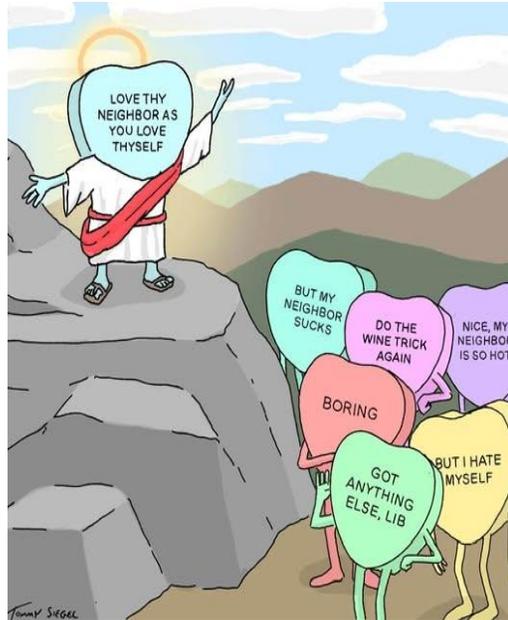
But don't most people believe in evolution? A Gallup poll, news.gallup.com, reports 58% of Americans believe in some kind of evolution. However, only 24% believe that God was not involved: 37% believe God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so; 34% believe human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life,

but God guided this process; 24 % believe human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God had no part in this process.

More Falun Gong Trouble

The Falun Gong is a Chinese religious organization, founded in the 1990s, persecuted by the Chinese government as evil. Last month's PANViews reported on efforts by Rep. Scott Perry to protect the organization in the US.

Shen Yun Performing Arts, a traditional Chinese dance company, is an arm of the Falun Gong. According to nytimes.com, two former dancers have sued the group, contending the company made a fortune while exploiting an "army of child laborers." The suit maintains the child dancers worked under horrible conditions and were subject to psychological coercion. The Times notes that its report on the treatment of the performers and its financial practices last year resulted in a first lawsuit. In addition, there's a federal investigation into possible visa fraud, and New York state is checking into its compliance with labor laws.



The Shen Yun performs hundreds of acrobatic dance shows, described as "China Before Communism," every year. The lawsuit claims the Shen Yun accumulated \$266 million in assets by 2023, earned by performers working up to 15 hours a day for little money. Shen Yun of course denies the allegations saying they "are false and present a distorted picture of our organization, our mission, and our faith."

Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, started Shen Yun in 2006. The lawsuit claims that Li and his wife, Li Rui, expanded Shen Yun at Dragon Springs, its 400-acre headquarters northwest of New York City. They claim they provided an education at two schools, but the suit contends the schools were just a "pretext."

The Shen Yun are accused of forced labor, human trafficking and other violations of the Federal Trafficking Victims Protections Act. By the way, If you'd like to see them for yourself, they are performing in Philadelphia May 7 -11.

Fetuses and Unborn Children

The Catholic Church describes fetuses as unborn children, to justify their description of abortion as murder.

Catholic Health Initiatives-Iowa (CHI), a religious health provider, is arguing in a medical malpractice suit that an unborn child is not a "person" for purposes of figuring out damage awards.

Per iowacapitaldispatch.com, Iowa court awards for malpractice are maxed out at \$250,000, unless the case involves the "loss or impairment of mind or body." Therefore, CHI and MercyOne hospitals are arguing that the cap still applies when the loss involves a fetus, or unborn child.



CHI is a nonprofit, tax-exempt institution, with a stated mission of providing health care “in the spirit of the gospel.” Its ethic guidelines, approved in 2018, say that it is committed to “respect the sacredness of every human life from the moment of conception until death.”

The lawsuit involves care given to Miranda Anderson, who was 34 weeks pregnant when she arrived at a CHI hospital because of elevated blood pressure, headaches and edema. That hospital thought she might be experiencing pre-eclampsia, which can lead to complications and may require an early delivery, so she was transferred to MercyOne.

After a few days she was discharged. The day after her discharge she went back to the hospital and underwent a caesarean and delivered a nonviable baby.

Her lawsuit claims the CHI and MercyOne and their doctors were negligent in not recommending an early delivery and states the \$250,000 cap on noneconomic damages should not apply. The hospitals claim the Iowa legislature never intended for the loss of an unborn baby to be considered as the “loss of impairment of mind or body.”

Their defense says the Anderson’s lawyers are trying “to put words in the Legislature’s mouth ... There is no case law, and plaintiffs cite to none, finding ‘loss of pregnancy’ is a ‘loss or impairment of a bodily function.’” To prove this point, the hospitals cite that it wasn’t until 2023, two years after the Anderson pregnancy, that “loss of pregnancy” was added to the exception for the cap on damages. Anderson’s attorneys counterargue that these words were added for clarity’s sake, not to expand the scope of the law. More recently, the hospitals’ attorney argues that “finding an unborn child to be a ‘person’ would lead to serious implications in other areas of the law.”

This seems especially hypocritical, since the Catholic Church’s opposition to abortion is centered on its belief that fetuses are persons.

The contradiction finally dawned on the hospitals. Yahoo.com reports the attorneys notified the court they would withdraw the motion to cap damages on the basis that there was no loss of life, saying “We are a Catholic hospital and obviously the Catholic faith believes that life begins at conception.” The judge noted he had “wondered about that stance,” since it seemed to contradict the position the hospitals had taken in other situations.

The president/CEO of MercyOne issued a written statement that said, in part, “we are heartbroken that our belief that human personhood begins at conception would ever be called into question. As a Catholic health system, the sanctity of life is not just a belief we hold; it is the foundation of every action we take. While the motion (to limit damages) was accurate from a purely legal standpoint, it has caused confusion

and concern. That is why we have asked our counsel to withdraw the motion with respect to MercyOne. No courtroom argument should ever cast doubt on the deeply held Catholic values that guide MercyOne.”



The Real Tariff Issue

Many people are worried about the potential increase in cost for many key items – food, clothes, things that are hard to do without.

Christians had another issue. Most Bibles are printed in China. Did this mean Bibles would cost more?

Apparently, yes. Ministrywatch.com worried about the potential increase but held out hope. Bibles were specifically exempted from tariffs during the first Trump administration. Perhaps they would be again?

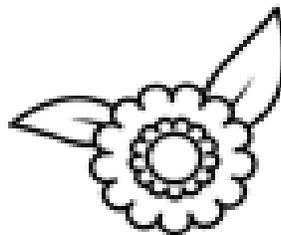
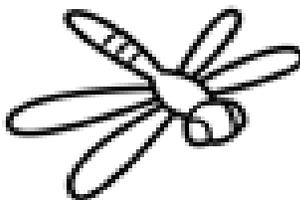
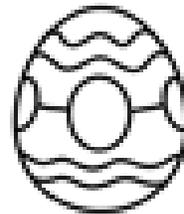
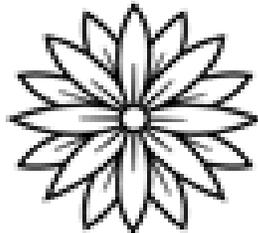
Ministrywatch.com notes that American Bible purchases are on the upswing. It reports a Wall Street Journal story saying there was a 22% increase in the sale of Bibles in the first 10 months of 2024, as compared to the same period in 2023.

It turns out that many Bibles are printed on thinner paper than other books, so that special printing facilities and personnel are needed. China has met this need, with China's Amity Printing Company a top producer, providing Bibles in 147 languages.

But fear no more. Christianitytoday.com reports that it received an email from US Customs and Border Protection stating that tariffs, including tariffs specific to China, will not apply to Bibles, or other religious books. Glad they're worried about the important stuff.

FUN!

Color away!



Word Search

Natural disasters

C	A	L	C	L	T	H	G	U	O	R	D	L	H
V	A	A	D	B	L	I	Z	Z	A	R	D	R	F
N	D	I	N	F	A	Q	I	M	P	A	C	T	L
O	G	E	D	I	L	S	D	N	A	L	L	E	O
O	G	Z	W	T	T	S	U	N	A	M	I	A	O
H	I	E	V	O	L	C	A	N	O	H	A	O	D
P	A	V	A	L	A	N	C	H	E	I	N	Q	R
Y	N	L	I	G	H	T	N	I	N	G	I	A	Z
T	H	N	N	E	O	I	P	A	O	C	N	H	W
V	O	D	O	N	U	T	S	L	A	K	R	L	A
G	D	U	A	H	U	R	R	I	C	A	N	E	O
E	R	I	F	D	L	I	W	R	H	V	G	A	P
E	K	A	U	Q	H	T	R	A	E	T	L	H	O
B	E	O	D	A	N	R	O	T	W	E	L	O	H

- WILDFIRE
- EARTHQUAKE
- VOLCANO
- TYPHOON
- DROUGHT
- TORNADO
- AVALANCHE
- BLIZZARD
- IMPACT
- LIGHTNING
- FLOOD
- LANDSLIDE
- TSUNAMI
- HURRICANE

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/1828/>

PAN News & Updates

PA NONBELIEVERS' ANNUAL SUMMER SOLSTICE POTLUCK PICNIC

**SATURDAY, JULY 12, 2025 @ 11AM
GIFFORD PINCHOT STATE PARK
2200 ROSSTOWN RD., LEWISBERRY, PA 17339
SHADYSIDE PAVILION
ACTIVITIES, FOOD, HIKING, ETC.
MORE DETAILS TO COME**



Kitted Thinking Tools Zoom meeting, every Monday from 5:00 – 6:00 pm. Open to PAN members (or by special invitation). The Zoom link is <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82977312179?pwd=tTTQ8y283hinDTabFOoPQIsCLYq6AK.1> and the passcode to enter the group is: 672806.

Mark your calendars! Here's PAN's tabling schedule, so far:

Dillsburg Pickle Fest, May 10; York Pride, June 14; Jubilee Day, June 19; Lancaster Pride, June 28; Harrisburg Pride, July 26; Red Lion Street Festival, August 9; Adams County Heritage Festival, September 21; Pumpkin Fest, October 11 – 12

Meetings – PAN holds in-person and online meetings. Locations, times, and dates below.

Online meeting: Fourth Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm. We hope to split the meeting into an hour of chat and an hour of presentation or more structured discussion. Anyone with a book/movie review, discussion topic, or potential guest speaker should contact Dietrich Dellinger @ guyinnagorillasuit@gmail.com

Chambersburg – Second Thursday of the month, 6:30 pm, Volcano Japanese Restaurant
955 Wayne Ave, Chambersburg

Cumberland/Mechanicsburg – Third Monday of every month at 6:45., Ever Grain Brewing Co. – The Taproom, 4444 Carlisle Pike, Suite C

Harrisburg– First Wednesday of the month, 6:30 pm, Zeroday Brewing Company Taproom, 923 North 3rd Street.

Lancaster – Fourth Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm, Centerville Diner, 100 S. Centerville Rd.

Lebanon - This meeting is currently on pause.

Reading – Third Thursdays at 7:15pm, 3rd & Spruce Drafthaus, 238 S 3rd Ave, Reading, PA 19611
York – First Sunday at noon, Mexitaly Brick Oven Brewhouse, 2440 East Market St.

How to Contribute to PAN

Giant Cards - We will have Giant grocery store cards available for purchase at PAN meetings. You pay face value for the card and use the face value at the store, but Giant lets PAN have 5% of that face value. If you shop at Giant, anyway, use the cards in lieu of cash and help PAN. What could be easier?

Pennies for PAN - Finally, we are happy to take money the old-fashioned way. You can give your tax-deductible contribution to a Board Member at one of our meetings or events, you can donate via PayPal on our website, www.panonbelievers.org, or you can mail a check to us at PA Nonbelievers, Inc. PO Box 702, York, PA 17405. Remember when you donate you can indicate what fund you want your donation to go to, you can find the list of our funds on the PAN website in the Donate section.

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