

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living. Member organization of the [Humanists of Florida](#), the [AHA](#), [COR](#), and [CSH](#). Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com



Occupy!

It's a word heard round the world in the last 4 months. It is the battle cry of the 99% against the ruling 1 percent in hundreds of cities around the world. The most famous of these occupations is centered on Wall street in New York. We are pleased to have

Dr. Bruce Wright, as our guest speaker. He can provide us with considerable insight into this movement. He is not only an involved participant but an anthropologist as well. With his background in the social sciences, he is well positioned to assess the social, economic, and political aspects of the movement. In the opinion of many observers, the Occupy movement presages a renewal of grass roots political activism that has not been seen in this country since the sixties. It has become clear that a number of factors have come together to ignite this surge: financial collapse, wealth disparity, climate and environmental factors, the continuing deterioration of the quality of everyday life, as physical structures and social services erode.

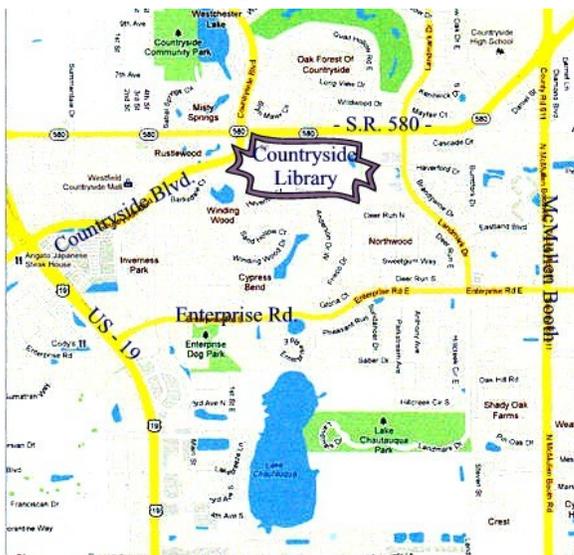


This is yet another opportunity for society to reform itself in response to a perception of imminent crises; a time for Humanist ideas. See more on [page 7](#).

Starting in February

Our Meeting space will move to the **Countryside Library** at 2741 State Rd. 580 Clearwater, FL 33761. It's just a few miles further north. We were unable to secure our traditional space at the Clearwater East Library. We sincerely regret the inconvenience.

Don't forget to bring canned and boxed food for **Tampa Bay Harvest.**



Please join us for this free and open discussion.

On **Saturday, January 7th**

at **2 PM:**
Clearwater East Library
2251 Drew St.
Clearwater

Following our meeting, many of us will dine and argue together at the

Farmer Boy Restaurant
at 2129 Drew St. just 2 blocks west of the Library.

Volume 20 No. 12

January, 2012

Join us in our effort to ignite critical thinking, and embrace reason, & compassion in life, and to make the light of our life shine in the dark places of confusion.

~ **Join or Renew** ~

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast. Annual Dues

- Trial -3 month- free news
- Regular -\$25.**
 - Renewal (January)
- Reg. Couple -\$30.
- Life -\$200.
- Life Couple -\$250.
- Associate -\$10.
- Contribution for growth

If new, please fill out the form; if renewing just indicate your name and any changes from our previous information. Thanks!

Name: _____

Address -if new : _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

(Privacy respected)

Send to:
Glenn Paul, Asst. Treasurer
Humanist Society of the Suncoast
2507 First St. #E
Indian Rocks Beach
33785-3010



Humanists work to build a world in which happiness is the enduring criterion of social policy.

What do Humanists Want?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of the human spirit.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

The moveable feast for January will take place at the

Pizza Shack

on Sunday January 22 at 5:00PM. Fine Italian cuisine is featured at reasonable prices.

The restaurant is located at 11963 Indian Rocks Rd just a block north of Walsingham Rd in Largo - about 1 1/2 miles east of Gulf Blvd across from a Publix in a small strip center.

Please contact Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or email kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com or reservations by Saturday January 21th.

Laugh Lines

Travel Edition

I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends, family and work. I live close so it's a short drive.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!

And, sometimes I think I am in Vincible but life shows me I am not.

People keep telling me I'm in Denial but I'm positive I've never been there before! *Thanks to Connie Purdum*

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.
the Association of Secular Humanist Societies

Board of Directors

Meets Sept., December, April

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Jim Peterson, President
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~*~*~*~*~*~*

Jim Butler Publisher.

Jim Peterson, Editor

Have an Idea, opinion or essay you want to share?

E-Mail us at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Brighten a Day

for a member of our family

As we get older, we get better, but sometimes there's just that little hiccup that might dampen our enthusiasm slightly. Then we need each other ... just a little more.

Bob Collette is recovering from surgery while wife, **Dot** is having a little trouble with general memory problems. They can use a little support. dotybob@verizon.net

Marios Psomas recently had a little heart attack. Happily for us, he seems to be recovering nicely.

marios_psomas@hotmail.com

Please let me know of anyone who would like to be contacted .

Jim Peterson
Jamestp@metrodirect.net
See [page 3](#) for more on the Caring committee

Need Help? Want to Help?

Watch for an important announcement from this committee in next month's newsletter!

It has been observed that "charity begins at home." But there is something more to the notion of charity than merely the socially obligatory motion of making donations and offering support to relatives in times of stress. This is more than just a high falutin intellectual discussion group. We as individuals have long endured the vicissitudes of arrogant criticism for expressing unpopular and unconventional beliefs and ideas. We come here to seek solace in the company of others with similar experiences. We come to bask in the acceptance we find here and in the unique values we often hear expressed. We find in the lives of others an empathetic resonance with our own lives.

A Social Caring Committee has been formed to help with our individual needs in times of distress or discomfort. If you are or know someone who is sick, recovering, hospitalized, going through a life trauma, or just lonely, and who would enjoy talking with other members, please let your editor know so they can be listed in our "Brighten a Day" feature on page 2.

At this point four members have volunteered to participate on the committee:

- ◆ Patricia Walters (813) 988-5977
- ◆ Terri Eckstein (813) 891-9399
- ◆ Jerry Moore (727) 455-4973
- ◆ Nan Owens (813) 662-6612

Contact any of them if you feel you or someone in our group may need help.

Humanism is a philosophy with a long history of advocacy for the well being of the human creature. This organization exists largely to provide for the needs of its members.

Our Humanist Society is actively looking for interesting speakers with novel and well thought out ideas on just about any subject of interest to a general audience - even if not from a distinctly Humanist perspective.

Let me know if you would like to recommend a person, idea, or organization.

Call Jim at (813) 531-8138 or

E-mail me at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Have an opinion, idea, news, or essay?

This newsletter is your space.

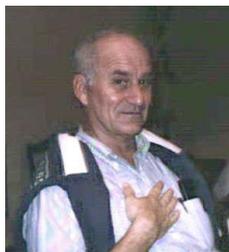
For editorial consideration for the next issue, contact Jim Peterson at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Here's a chance to do some good

by 'clicking on' to some various websites daily. It only takes about 1 minute each day to click onto thebreastcancersite.com, thehungersite.com and about 6 more worthy websites each day, each of which produces income for the site, and costs you nothing but a minute of your time. Please consider doing it daily - it is a gift that keeps on giving. I have been helping these websites for almost ten years.

Glenn Paul



Read Humanist Periodicals:

The Humanist, Free Inquiry, Free Mind, Humanist Perspectives, Skeptical Inquirer, Secular Humanist Bulletin, The Florida Humanist Journal, Skeptic, Essays in Humanism, and many others.

Volunteer !

If we are truly to make a difference in an often indifferent world, we will have to constantly renew our efforts. Retirement is not the end of activity, but the beginning of putting your energy and efforts into the things that truly matter.

If you think that the basic philosophical outlook of Humanism can make a major contribution to human well being at all levels, it is time to join us as a volunteer to put your beliefs to work.

At the recent board meeting, we made plans to participate with an **information table** at a major public event in the coming year.

We are putting together a **Speakers Bureau** for outreach. You can help in many ways.

And we need help in setting up our meetings. See a **Board member** to offer your help.

Now, Find the Humanist Society on Facebook!

Be a Friend!

Thanks to Bob Byrch!

"Humanism involves far more than the negation of supernaturalism. It requires an affirmative philosophy . . . translated into a life devoted to one's own improvement and the service of all mankind."

Corliss Lamont



Humanists Mourn Christopher Hitchens: Stalwart for Atheism

4



By Brian Magee, AHA

(Washington, DC - December 16, 2011) -- Humanists and atheists are saddened by the death of the prolific writer and outspoken atheist Christopher Hitchens, who died Thursday at the age of 62 after battling esophageal cancer.

“Humanity has lost a powerful stalwart for atheism,” said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. “Christopher Hitchens changed the discussion about religion and non-belief by championing public criticism of theology.”

One of a group that became known as The Four Horsemen (which also includes Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris), he held a dual US-UK citizenship and was connected with several secular groups in the U.S., including the American Humanist Association—he was the keynote speaker at the 2008 World Humanist Congress in Washington, DC.

Hitchens became a prolific debater on the subject of religion and atheism especially since his *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* in 2007, developing into someone as well-known for those appearances as for his writing. His debating opponents included Tony Blair, David Wolpe, and Chris Hedges.

His blunt and forthright reputation in promoting atheism got another widespread boost after the publication of *The Portable Atheist*, which also came out in 2007, where he comments on the works of a many of the world’s best thinkers.

“Hitchens’ mastery of a logical argument along with his confident demeanor gave many the courage to come out of the atheist closet,” Speckhardt said.

In *Letters to a Young Contrarian*, published in 2001, Hitchens identifies himself as “not even an atheist so much as I am an antitheist,” adding, “the effect of religious belief is positively harmful.”

In an interview published in 2010 with Unitarian minister Marilyn Sewell, Hitchens explained that humanism should be seen as worthy of producing a desirable set of moral values. “...show me what there is, ethically, in any religion that can’t be duplicated by Humanism,” he declared, adding later, “...any good action by a religious person could be duplicated or matched, if not surpassed, by someone who didn’t believe in god.”

Hitchens’ writing career included wide-ranging cultural and political criticisms at places like *Vanity Fair*, *The Atlantic*, and *Slate*. His work included many figures not usually targets of critics, including the Dalai Lama, Michael Moore, Ronald Reagan and Jerry Falwell. His rational and sharp wit affected all who encountered it, including the overall culture.

Examples of his famous and resolute condemnations of religion include these passages from *God is Not Great*:

“If religious instruction were not allowed until the child had attained the age of reason, we would be living in a quite different world.”

“Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience.”

“Human decency is not derived from religion. It precedes it.”

Hitchens announced in 2010 that he had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Some predicted Hitchens would abandon his non-belief after his diagnosis, but, instead, he reiterated that his illness did not alter his critical views on religion and his positive views on life.





How many Humanist Society members would like to travel by Bus to DC for this event? Contact Rick O'keefe at : rokeefe@centerforinquiry.net

What is the Reason Rally?

The Reason Rally is a movement-wide event sponsored by the country's major secular organizations. The intent is to unify, energize, and embolden secular people nationwide, while dispelling the negative opinions held by so much of American society... and having a damn good time doing it!

It will be the largest secular event in world history. There will be music, comedy, great speakers, and lots of fun... and it's free!

When will the Rally be held?

On March 24, 2012, from 10:00AM – 4:00PM at the National Mall, nontheists from all corners of the nation will descend on Washington, D.C. en masse to deliver the good news: "We're huge, we're everywhere, and we're growing."

Why are we doing this?

Across America, in every city, every town, and every school, secularism is on the rise. Whether people call themselves atheists, agnostics, secular Humanists, or any of the other terms used to describe their god-free lifestyle, secularism is coming out of the closet. According to the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (PDF), the percentage of people with no religious affiliation grew in all fifty states.

The purpose of this particular rally will be to advance secularism (in the broadest sense of the word) in society.

Are we just going to use this opportunity to trash religion?

No. This will be a positive experience, focusing on all non-theists have achieved in the past several years (and beyond) and motivating those in attendance to become more active. While speakers have the right to say what they wish, the event is indeed a celebration of secular values.

What do you hope to achieve from this Rally?

We have three main goals:

- **To encourage attendees (and those who can't make it) to come out of the closet as an atheist**, or at least a supporter of secular values.
- **To dispel stereotypes** – there is no one "True Atheist" no matter what your pastor or parent may tell you. We will have non-theists from all political persuasions, ethnicities, genders, and backgrounds. We will show that there are atheists in every American demographic.
- **Legislative equality.** We want to show the country that atheists can run for office and adequately represent theists, just as theists in office can represent atheists proudly and openly. We deserve a seat at the table just like theists, and we hope this rally can put our values in the radar of American voters, who may one day elect an atheist to public office.

Introducing our new sister Organization...

Tampa Humanist Association

THA is headed up by board member, **Rob Byrch**, who acting with leaders in HSoS, brought this Into full fruition in December. The idea was discussed at board meetings as far back as February, of creating another group centered in the Tampa area. Both groups will be sharing programs at all levels, and will provide twice as many opportunities for all members to hear speakers, participate in social events, and generally share in all the benefits that come from being in the company of people like us.



THA will recruit it's own members as well, and will have a major impact on further development in the Bay area. Along with CFI, headed by Rick O'Keefe, and AoF headed by Ed Golly, this will afford yet another convenient opportunity for independently minded people in our area to find each other. Along with these organizations, are more than 10 meet-up groups that have similar advanced adult programs such as Café Philo, and Socrates, and others aimed at stoking serious conversations about traditional and contemporary issues.

Read more about THA at:

<http://www.tampahumanist.com>

www.facebook.com/tampahumanist

www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association JP

THA first Meet a great Success...



THA's inaugural meeting was held December 17th at the Jimmie B. Keel Library at 2902 Bearrs Ave (east of Dale Mabry). 17 people attended.

A number of new faces were seen, as well as many old friends. It will mean some hard work, but the future for this group, with Rob's leadership looks very promising.

Those interested in attending future meetings should register on the Meetup page at:

www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association



Humanism, Our World, and Our Future

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE
WINTER 2012 PROGRAMS

TUESDAY LIBERAL ARTS COURSES

Climate Change and the Future of Tampa Bay

The future holds challenging possibilities. The depletion of petroleum and other industrial commodities, and the pressing problems of climate change and overpopulation, involve science, economics and politics. All will undoubtedly influence Tampa Bay's future. This course will attempt to uncover the reality and dispel the myths concerning each of these aspects of climate change. Current research, relevant news and experts from various disciplines will add to our understanding. All issues will be fully discussed, and class participants are invited to bring their own proposals, thoughts and ideas. (Science & Mathematics)

Matt Cooper, Luke Melton, Ron Frase & Jim Peterson of the Tampa Bay Post Carbon Council and the Humanist Society will present.

Fee: \$30 • 2nd choice option: \$15 (Call 1/24) • parking: \$9

122XOSCSM0261 • Tue • 2/7-2/21 • 10am-12pm • 3 mtgs
Vincent A. Stabile Research Bldg, SRB USF Campus, Tampa



Free parking is by valet.
You may also choose to purchase a USF parking permit, \$9.



TBPCC is an autonomous adjunct to the Humanist Society. In February of 2012, council members will be presenting **a course on Post Carbon issues** at the University of South Florida. We will show that there are likely to be dramatic changes in the way we live in this century.

Humanist Society members, **Ron Frase, Jim Peterson, Matt Cooper,** and **Luke Melton** are planning the curriculum for this initial three week course. It will take place at the USF Tampa Campus. Expert guidance, AV technology, and interactive devices will supplement the learning environment.

Our subject matter will encompass the full range of likely social, economic, and natural problems that will engage the attention of people in the rapidly emerging future. At this point, the constraint of time imposed by campus logistics will prevent us from having the more full ranging discussion that is needed by many of these subjects, but we will try to hit the most salient aspects of each area. The next time we do this, we hope to have 6 to 8 weeks to more fully unpack the more significant aspects of how these problems might impact our civilization.

These will affect all aspects of our lives including housing, transportation, work, the natural environment, and our relations with each other. See future issues for more.

This is yet another opportunity to bring attention to the problems and opportunities we will have in the future. The philosophical perspective of humanism can make a significant contribution to that transition.

We invite you to become a member of the Council, and make a difference in the quality of our lives. Click below or: www.tampabaypostcarbon.com

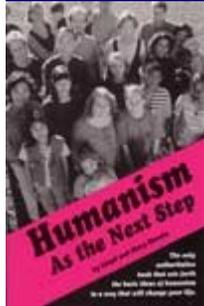
Humanist Books from the AHA

One Planet One People by Carl Coon



By Carl Coon, Former Ambassador to Nepal In this succinct, highly readable overview of the evolution of human society, the author argues that the 21st century will witness a crucially important and difficult transition for the human race. Blending the disciplines of anthropology and evolutionary psychology with over thirty years of experience in the diplomatic corps, Coon traces the evolution of the human tendency to divide others into two groups, "us versus them." Today, he argues, we have reached a stage where the whole world must be viewed as "us," for only a united world community can cope with today's global challenges.

Humanism As the Next Step - Mary and Lloyd Morain



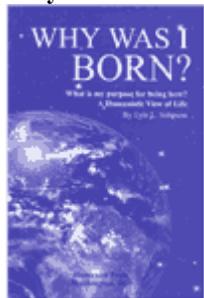
\$10.00

By Mary and Lloyd Morain.

While there have been technical studies of humanism in the past, never before has there been such an authoritative, popular treatment of the whole field.

Paperback, 145 pages.

Why Was I Born?



\$5.00

Why Was I Born? book.

What is my purpose for being here?

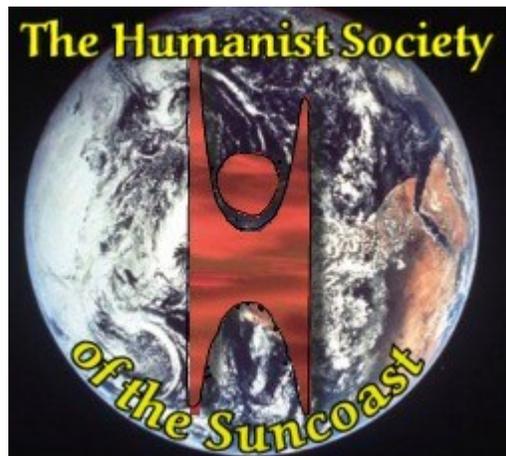
A Humanistic view of life by Lyle J Simpson.

These books and a great many more can be ordered from: [The Humanist Press](http://evolvefish.com/fish/HumanistPress.html)
<http://evolvefish.com/fish/HumanistPress.html>

Bruce Wright's Biography...

Dr. Bruce Wright - has a doctorate in Ministry and Master's in Pastoral Psychology. He is a licensed addictions and domestic violence counselor. He is a Baptist Pastor and Director of Refuge Ministries who serves on the Executive Committee of the [Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign](#). The Refuge has been around for 20 years and, the Poor People's Campaign for 15 years. The Campaign has 120 organizations of poor and homeless that are members including the Refuge. He is part of [St. Pete For Peace](#) and the Homeless Coalition, as well as the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. A musician and a poet, he has 2 children, one in College.

Find out more about end of life issues. Everyone has to face this final question. But there are choices not provided by conventional institutions. For more information see: www.compassionandchoices.org



Current news of interest

The Development Committee

The Committee will begin the New year on January 10th at 10 o'clock, according to Chair, Matt Cooper. There is still much to do if the Society is to fulfill its potential.

The Speakers Bureau

Those of us who would like to help the Humanist cause by becoming a speaker on various aspects for public organizations are invited to join the Speakers Group after the meeting.

The Tampa Humanist Association

Rob Byrch hosted the inaugural meeting of the Tampa Humanist Association on Saturday December 17th at the Keel Library. 17 people attended, and was deemed to be a great success by all.



Don't Forget...

Tampa Bay Harvest Please...

bring as many boxed and canned food items as you can to this meeting.

With the important help of **Glenn Paul** and **Tampa Bay Harvest**, we can do our part to help relieve significant human suffering in our area. This year's goal: 1000 pounds. **It's the Humanist thing to do!**

Glenn needs and deserves more support to make this project the success it ought to be for an organization of our size. If you can help (and I know you can!) please see Glenn to offer your support.



Compassion & Choices
Choice & Care at the End of Life.

Center for Inquiry Calendar

CFI presents a fairly full calendar of opportunities to hear a variety of great speakers on subjects of current and enduring interest. **Check Website updates** <http://www.CenterForInquiry.net/Tampa>.

Our monthly **CFI Skeptics/Humanists in the Pub-Dunedin** is the 2nd Monday of January (the 9th) at Al Fresco restaurant, 344 Main Street Dunedin, FL 34698-5732, (727) 736-4299. Voted "Best Restaurant on the Pinellas Trail 2009" by Tampa Bay Magazine, Al Fresco is a quaint bistro on Main Street, in the hub of downtown Dunedin. Featuring "home cooking", the food is indeed quite good and affordable.

See map, menu, etc. at: <http://www.cafealfrescoonline.com/>

There is a new humanist association in Clearwater. The 1st **UU Humanists** meeting will be Jan 15th (Sun) at 12:30 in the Patio Room of Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater. The speaker will be Ed Ericson, a retired UU minister and leader of 2 Ethical Culture groups in Washington, DC and New York. He's a signer of the 2nd Humanist Manifesto and author of 4 books on humanism. The meeting will last 1 hour, and all are welcome. Info and map to UUC: <http://uuclearwater.org/>

Center for Inquiry-Tampa Bay announces the next **UU Humanists versus Baptist debate** will take place on Jan 17th at 7 p.m. at UU Clearwater's campus. Address is 2470 Nursery Rd., Clearwater. The topic for discussion is, "Do reason and evidence support Christian claims?"

Please share this with friends. Even Christians might like to come to the debate, for obvious reasons. Association leaders, please invite your association's members. Submitted by **Rick Okeefe**



Senators Patrick Leahy (D- VT) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) have recently introduced a bipartisan bill, S. 1925, to re-authorize and improve the Violence Against Women Act.

The passage of the original Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 was a giant step forward for our nation. Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are pervasive issues throughout the United States. VAWA meant that our federal government formally acknowledged that domestic and sexual violence cause tremendous harm, and therefore put resources into helping victims and responding to these crimes. Our nation and millions of individuals are safer as a result.

The time has come to again reauthorize this critical legislation. The Violence Against Women Act of 2011 will build upon efforts to prevent violence before it begins and teach the next generation that violence is always wrong. Congress must reauthorize this legislation to address this and build healthy communities.

Stand with the AHA in supporting this important piece of legislation today.

The American Humanist Association affirms the fundamental nature of a person's right to be free from violence. As such, we believe that Congress has a duty to pass legislation like VAWA which protects our fellow citizens from violent aggressors. Please take a moment to contact your senators and ask them to support VAWA now.

By supporting the survivors of violence and methods to prevent these crimes, you help to improve the lives of countless individuals. I'm asking you, as a supporter of humanism and human dignity, to make a difference and take action now. Roy Speckhardt **AHA**



Dear ACLU Supporters,

Top members of Congress are secretly meeting now to try to figure out how to jam through a dangerous bill soon.

Their main focus? Legislation authorizing this president and all future presidents to order the U.S. military to pick up and imprison people, including U.S. citizens — without charging them or putting them on trial.

We need you to take immediate action to prevent our country from becoming a place where the military can throw a person in jail and let him or her waste away without charge or trial.

Let's be clear about what this proposal really is: no due process, no trial, and no proof beyond a reasonable doubt — and indefinite military imprisonment based on suspicion alone.

A handful of senators secretly came up with this outrageous indefinite detention provision and attached it to the National Defense Authorization Act. And an even smaller group of House members forced through the House of Representatives a law for worldwide war, and worldwide imprisonment, in virtually any country where a terrorism suspect lives, even here in America itself.

The House and the Senate are now rushing to come up with a joint version of the bill and ram it through Congress within the next two weeks.

For more information on Civil liberty in Florida, see: <http://www.aclufl.org>

People
Over Politics

Our Website All newsletters from the past two years
<http://suncoasthumanist.com>