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## *Theocracy Alert*

### Religion and politics, billboards and dirty tricks

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May 19, 2005—Karl Rove opened Pandora's Box to find ways to reelect George W. Bush. He found them and used them. Not surprisingly, other things slithered out of the box as well. One of them was [The House of Worship Free Speech Restoration Act](#). It would allow pastors to preach hate and politics from the pulpit without risking the church's tax-exempt status.

Matt Friedeman elaborated and advised in a recent [story](#) from the Christian news service, AgapePress:

As a middle-aged pastor and a seminary professor for nearly 20 years, let me add a little counsel for young pastors ready to set the world aflame for Christ:

Stick to the basics. The Word of God clearly explained and spoken by pastors who are Spirit-filled, driven by Great Commission purpose and are themselves in the cultural fight (beyond their preaching ministries) is what is changing the world for the glory of God.

Whatever a "spirit-filled" pastor says from the pulpit, no matter how vile or how politically motivated, would be protected speech meant "to set the world aflame for Christ." Interesting metaphors. They're reminiscent of the fiery rhetoric of the Holy Inquisition when subhuman "animals" were tortured and burned at the stake by politically motivated, "spirit-filled" clergymen.

One of the latest well financed inquiries to slither out of Pandora's Box is the Center for Consumer Freedom's attack on PETA, People for the Ethical treatment of Animals. That's "ethical treatment"—*ethics*—something the leaders of the evangelical Christian Right and their political hero [Tom DeLay](#) seem to know absolutely nothing about.

CCF's Times Square "PETAKillsAnimals.com" [billboard](#) was a featured story on WorldNetDaily (WND), a far-right "free press" with an attitude. [WND](#) is run by [Joseph Farah](#), who seems to favor the [death](#) penalty for adulterers and uses such delightful terms as "[scumbucket](#)" in his "journalism." On March 18, 2005, WND featured a [story](#) entitled "Throw out all female members of Congress!" So it's not surprising that WorldNetDaily found the Center for Consumer Freedom's attack on People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals newsworthy, but what's behind the billboard and the attack?

On their website, the Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) claims "From July 1998 through the end of 2003, PETA killed over 10,000 dogs, cats, and other 'companion animals'—at its Norfolk, Virginia headquarters. That's more than five defenseless animals every day." But in its response to questions about the CCF ad, [PETA](#) said, "We do not run a shelter. In fact, we refer every healthy, cute, young animal we can to shelters. And some of the animals we rescue are lost companions whom we are able to joyfully reunite with their families. Of the homeless animals we take in ourselves, the healthy and adoptable ones are fostered, adopted, or taken to local shelters. However, most of the animals we receive are broken beings for whom euthanasia is, without a doubt, the most humane option. To learn more, please see our [fact sheet](#)."

CCF bemoaned the euthanizing of “more than five defenseless animals every day,” but had absolutely nothing to say about the *millions* of defenseless animals brutally killed every day by the meat industry (not to mention the unethical treatment the animals suffer before being slaughtered: things like debeaking young chickens, cutting the tails off young pigs, removing their teeth and ripping out their testicles, all without anesthesia). Could CCF’s silence be because the organization—run by lobbyist [Richard Berman](#)—is a front group for the industries that perpetrate such unethical treatment of animals?

In their “about us,” CCF claims “The Center for Consumer Freedom is a nonprofit coalition of restaurants, food companies, and consumers working together to promote personal responsibility and protect consumer choices. The growing cabal of ‘food cops,’ health care enforcers, militant activists, meddling bureaucrats, and violent radicals who think they know ‘what’s best for you’ are pushing against our basic freedoms.” One has to wonder if CCF considers the American Medical Association, the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society to be “food cops” and “health care enforcers” as well, since they all advocate lifestyles and dietary choices at odds with the products of CCF’s major financial supporters: Philip Morris, Outback Steakhouse, KFC?

As PETA noted, “These companies are concerned about the strides that PETA is making that are changing their industries and compelling them to take animal welfare concerns seriously, so they hope to scare people away from caring about animals by spending millions on ads like this.”

So what, then, is the goal of the Center for Consumer Freedom’s “PETAKillsAnimals.com” campaign? It’s right [there](#), on their website: “Sign the petition to have PETA’s tax-exemption status removed.”

Republican Rule: Protect the non-profit tax-exempt status of churches and ministries whose pastors and prophets belch forth hatred against [fellow Americans](#), and encourage those same “spirit-filled” clergymen to use their pulpits to tell the flock how to vote and to support unethical “leaders” like Tom DeLay.

Berman’s Benediction: Work toward removing the non-profit tax-exempt status of an organization whose message of “ethical treatment” for animals can not be impugned, so that fat-cat (Republican) lobbyists and their financially friendly industries can continue making big profits from the unethical treatment—and death—of animals.

What’s wrong with these political sermons?