

Teacher marked assignment



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For this assignment, I have looked through various articles on the online OU library and assessed them in connection with the articles that I have studied in Section 1 of Block 1. I have decided to look at three articles that are related to the role of the Presidents of the United States of America in the issue of Church and State. The first article that I found on this subject is titled " Church, State and Obama: A One-Year Report Card" (Church & State January 2010). The second article that I found on this subject is titled " Church, State and President Obama" (Church & State January 2009). The third article that I found on this subject is titled " Absolute Separation" (Church & State October 2010). I have decided to choose the first article to concentrate on in this assignment and to compare it to other articles that I have already studied. The article, " Church, State and Obama: A One-Year Report Card" was published in ' Church & State' in January 2010 and was written by Bob Boston. The premise of the article is that when it comes to Religion and the Government, President Obama has not always been consistent in the year that he has been in power. It is thought that Obama was a supporter of the church-state wall but opposing groups such as ' Religious Right' and ' Americans United' are both concerned about what may happen in the future. In the previous presidential era, under George W Bush there had been some changes made to the barrier between the government and religion. One of the main things that Bush encouraged was using tax funding for faith-based projects and organisations, as well as making changes to laws on abortion and stem-cell research. When it came to Stem Cell Research and Science, Obama promised to:"... restore science to its rightful place," (2010a). After only being president for two month, Obama made changes to the policies that Bush had put in place during his time as

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president. He also allowed more funding for practices that performed abortions. There has been some disappointment among other organisations over Obama's approach to 'faith-based' initiatives. This is when tax-payers money is used to fund religious based services and is often seen as a contradiction to the first amendment. Even though Obama had said in his campaign that he would maintain the faith-based office he did seem to do a u-turn on this promise once in office. He set up a President's Advisory Council as well as a Special Task Force to be able to help him with these difficult issues. These issues were also concerned with people being discriminated against because of their religious background. The article also points out Obama's opinions on the inclusion of all Americans, whether they have a faith or not. Especially, in today's American, which is made up of so many religions, Obama felt this was very important. In his year in power, he has invited different religious groups to celebrate a variety of religious festivals at the White House and felt it was important that there was no official religion in America. When it came to appointing Federal Judges, some organisations felt that Obama had chosen people who had a history in church/state issues, including a district judge called David Hamilton. They also felt that the issue of the appointment of Federal Judges was vital in the problem of the church and the state. The issue of support for public education is discussed in the article and it was thought that Obama did not agree with school vouchers being made available for Religious Schools, even though this had been the case during Bush's presidency. Obama decided that those already receiving the vouchers could continue to receive them until they had finished school, but new pupils would not be receiving them. The Justice Department had caused concern with some organisations when

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making decisions over cases regarding the church and state and had even, in some cases, refusing the claimant the right to sue. In conclusion, the article does point out that Obama's decisions on the church and state have been seen as an improvement on Bush's, but also highlights Obama wish to include both religious and non-religious groups. I will begin the second part of this essay with a brief description of the two organisations mentioned in the article. The Religious Right group is primarily classed as a 'movement' rather than an organisation. It was set up in the late 1970s and is more commonly connected with a religious response to the sexual revolution and public policy. This includes issues such as abortion, Lesbian and Gay rights, and pornography. They are also concerned with the right for religious practices to be sponsored by the government. In contrast, Americans United is concerned with the separation of church and state, as portrayed in the constitution. It was founded in 1947 and has close ties to the White House as well as working closely with the courts. So how does this article relate to the other material that I have studied so far in this block? The most significant material to begin with here would be the Constitution of the United State of America. There are two amendments that relate to the relationship between church and state. The first amendment states that: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free activity thereof...." (1789)The fourteenth amendment concentrates more on the liberty and equality of the citizens of the United States of America in its privileges and laws. This amendment was added in 1866 and is said to have more stature when being used to interpret the first amendment in court cases. The first amendment is a very narrow statement and does not seem to allow for any variation. However, when you compare this to the policies

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that George W Bush had allowed, then it seems to be interpreted by whoever happens to be president at the time. Perhaps, Obama is simply trying to restore the country back to the Constitution by making the changes that he did. It must also be very difficult to uphold laws that were made over two hundred years ago, especially when you look at the differences in society. The people responsible for the constitution could never have predicted the diverse society that lives in America today, as well as the advances in modern science and medicine. The constitution is possibly there as a starting point to the policies made by the government and may at times be misinterpreted. The issue of the interpretation of the first and fourteenth amendments is also highlighted in the 1947 court case of ' Everson vs. Board of Education of the Township of Ewing'. This is an interesting case in that parents of children attending Catholic schools in New Jersey were being reimbursed for their bus fare. The plaintiff had argued that using the money that he paid in tax to fund a religious education, being the catholic school, run by a catholic priest. However, the court decided that: " The expenditure of tax-raised funds thus authorised was for a public purpose, and did not violate the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment." (1947) This is an interesting case as it does relate to the policies that both Bush and Obama put in to place during their presidency. When it came to funding religious schools, not just the bus fares, Bush had implicated a policy for school vouchers for religious schools. However, when Obama came in to power, he appeared to waver over his opinion on this issue. He finally decided that those already in school could receive that vouchers but not new students. As said before, Obama appears to be holding to the constitution and maintaining the separation between church and state. In the case in <https://assignbuster.com/teacher-marked-assignment/>

1947, in the court of appeal, Justice Jackson laid down the fundamental fact that: