

# Faith Digest: Judge kills anti-Shariah law

August 22, 2013

**Oklahoma anti-Shariah amendment struck down.** A federal judge struck down Oklahoma's constitutional amendment that would have prohibited judges in the state from considering Shariah law. The amendment was approved by about 70 percent of Oklahoma voters in 2010, but the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) and the [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#) sued to block the amendment, arguing it violated separation of church and state and discriminated against Muslims. A U.S. District Court judge agreed and issued a temporary injunction against the amendment. That decision was upheld in 2011 by a federal appeals court that returned the case to the judge, who made the final ruling. The amendment specifically mentioned Shariah and is different from anti-Shariah "foreign law" bills adopted over the last few years by state legislators in Arizona, Kansas, Louisiana, South Dakota, Tennessee and Oklahoma.



Elizabeth Eaton

**Lutherans elect woman as presiding bishop.** The [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) elected Elizabeth Eaton as the denomination's presiding bishop—the first woman to hold the position. Eaton received 600 votes, compared to incumbent Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, who received 287.

Eaton, the current bishop of Cleveland, is married to Conrad Selnick, an Episcopal priest. A native of Cleveland, she received a master of divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School. Eaton will serve a six-year term beginning Nov. 1.

**Legal group vows suit over gay conversion law.** Licensed therapists are banned from using conversion therapy to try to change a child's sexual orientation from gay to straight under a bill Gov. Chris Christie signed Aug. 19, making New Jersey the second state to prohibit the practice. But [Liberty Counsel](#), a national Christian legal group that blocked an identical law from taking effect in California earlier this year, vowed to sue New Jersey, saying the legislation violates the First Amendment rights of parents and therapists. The new law prevents any licensed therapist, psychologist, social worker or counselor from using sexual orientation change efforts with a child under age 18. Offenders jeopardize their licensed status under the new law, which does not apply to clergy or anyone not licensed by the state. "The New Jersey governor is putting himself in every counseling room, dictating what kind of counseling clients can receive," said Mathew Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. "This bill provides a slippery slope of government infringing upon the First Amendment rights of counselors to provide, and patients to receive, counseling consistent with their religious beliefs."