

Faith Digest

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Obama proposes change in charitable deductions for wealthy. For the fourth year in a row, President Obama is proposing lower tax deductions for the wealthy on donations to churches and other nonprofit organizations. Under the 2013 budget proposal from the Obama administration, the tax break for charitable donations would fall from 35 percent to 28 percent for the top 2 percent of taxpayers, those earning more than \$250,000. Obama has argued in the past it is not fair that the wealthy receive a larger tax break for the same donations to charity when a middle class taxpayer can claim only a deduction of 15 percent. The White House said the change wouldn't affect the 80 percent of overall contributions that come from individuals and foundations and is unlikely to have a substantial impact on donations.

British court rules against town meeting prayers. A British High Court justice has triggered dismay and anger across England and Wales with a recent decision that declares prayers at town hall meetings against the law. Justice Duncan Ouseley ruled local government councils were violating a 40-year-old law if they conducted prayers "as part of a formal local government meeting." But the judge added that prayers could be allowed if they were held before the town hall meeting officially began, and if councilors were "not formally summoned to attend." The High Court ruling came after the [National Secular Society](#) and an atheist councilor, Clive Bone, filed suit against Bone's town council in Bideford, in southwest England.

No opt-out for Quebec students. Canada's highest court has ruled children in Quebec schools cannot opt out of a course on ethics and world religions. The Supreme Court unanimously rejected an appeal from Catholic parents who sought to keep their children out of the course

because they felt that exposing them to a variety of religions would confuse them. The nine high court judges disagreed, saying exposing children to beliefs and values that differ from their own is a fact of life in Canada's multicultural society. The Supreme Court decision upheld two lower court rulings that dismissed the parents' claim.

FBI, Muslims discuss training materials. FBI officials say they are willing to consider a proposal from a coalition of Muslim and interfaith groups to establish a committee of experts to review materials used in FBI anti-terrorism training. The coalition raised the idea during a meeting with FBI Director Robert Mueller, who met with the groups to discuss pamphlets, videos and other anti-terrorism training materials that critics say are either Islamophobic or factually incorrect. Groups at the meeting included the [Islamic Society of North America](#), the Muslim Public Affairs Council, the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Interfaith Alliance, and the Shoulder-to-Shoulder campaign. Mueller told representatives of the groups that FBI experts had reviewed almost all of the agency's training materials, including 160,000 pages of documents. More than 700 documents and 300 presentations were subsequently pulled from the agency's training materials.

-Compiled from [Religion News Service](#)