



[A Letter to Tony Perkins](#)



Tony Perkins Family Research Council
Hate Group Head

Sometimes people say more than they mean to say, or what they really think slips through in what they say. "Conservatives" often have this problem when they try to articulate beliefs that they know most Americans would excoriate in terms that make them sound oh, so reasonable. Any time Sarah Palin starts by saying "This isn't racist, but..." you can expect a particularly unsubtle example of this genre.

Somewhat more subtle, usually, is Tony Perkins, spokesmodel for the Family Research Council (FRC), whose name alone is an interesting example of the phenomenon. Who could possibly oppose research into families? So much as nick the surface, however, and one quickly learns that the FRC uses its own, Christian conservative, definition of "family." Always rendering "the family" to signal that, in their opinion, there is only one form of family that is morally and politically legitimate. They conduct essentially no research at all, because "research" is a practice of learning new things about the world. As good conservatives, the folks at FRC are resolutely opposed to anything new.

As one would expect, they vehemently oppose the Affordable Care Act. In August, Perkins claimed the Act threatened the very existence of the Republic and joined in calls to defund it. We all remember how well that turned out.

Equally predictable, FRC vehemently opposes any claims for or moves toward equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. At least since Anita Bryant, the attitude of conservatives toward queers has been the desire for us just to shut up and go away. What more reliable way to ensure that a person or a people shut up and go away than to have them die? In the 1980s, during the heyday of the Moral Majority, leaders of that organization publicly called for the execution of "unrepentant homosexuals."

It has never really been acceptable in broad public discourse in the United States to call outright for the deaths of an entire class of persons. Some white supremacists at the extremes made noises that seemed to involve advocating the death of all African Americans, but even they seemed extreme at the time. Certainly since World War II and the ugly example of the Nazis adopting the extirpation of Jews and other "undesirables," including queers, the idea of wishing death on an entire group of people is taboo.

That doesn't stop Perkins and his buddies at FRC from dreaming of day when the Republic is rid of its queer minority. He knows he can't say that out loud if he hopes to retain an iota of credibility, which is about all he has now.

How lucky for Perkins that the Obama Administration has just handed him the opportunity to beat two horses with one whip. Because he has this wacky idea that he wants every American to have health insurance, and believes queers are legitimate members of the Republic, Obama's staff have created Out2Enroll, a program designed to encourage LGBT people to buy health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. They went so far as to team up with a troupe of drag queens to get the message across to the target audience, or at least that subset of LGBT, mostly gay men, who go to drag shows (no comment). The Administration also decided to allow same-sex couples to apply for tax breaks under the ACA retroactively. This was an eminently sensible decision, given that the Supreme Court this year issued an opinion that has a major impact on the issue of federal benefits for same-sex couples.

To Perkins, the decision about allowing for retroactive tax breaks is just an example of "this administration's pro-homosexual partiality." Spreading benefits evenly among the population is "partiality" any time a group you don't like is among the beneficiaries.

To Perkins, the idea of encouraging queers to sign up for health insurance will inevitably crash the entire system. Conservatives are big on wish-fulfillment and self-fulfilling prophecies, as we have seen repeatedly with the Affordable Care Act. They believe the ACA and its healthcare exchanges must fail as a matter of ideological principle, they have done all they can to ensure that they do, in fact, fail. Even though one might think conservatives would eventually become accustomed to cognitive dissonance, they still seem prey to its ill effects.

Similarly, Christian conservatives see all LGBT persons as walking defiance of the laws of god and of nature. Most real natural laws, like, um, gravity, tend to be self-enforcing, so it's not all clear how LGBT persons can exist at all if god doesn't want us to, but that's another story. A necessary corollary in their minds to the defiance of god's law, LGBT people necessarily exhibit is that we must all be physically ill. This principle erupted with fury when

AIDS emerged initially as a disorder among gay men. If you're old enough, you'll recall the statement that AIDS was just god's punishment for gay men's defiance of god's law for correct human sexuality. Staff in the Reagan Administration commissioned an extensive study of public opinion about AIDS and found, much to the chagrin of Christian conservatives, only a tiny percentage of the U.S. population agreed with the AIDS as divine punishment thesis.

Perkins would never let the vast unpopularity of his ideas slow him down. One of my favorite things about conservatives is that they remain resolute in their belief. All evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, they speak for the vast majority of the American public. They're so cute.

According to Perkins, encouraging a bunch of sick people to buy health insurance is the last thing the Obama Administration should be doing. It is true that the whole logic of the Affordable Care Act is that requiring everyone to buy insurance will put a lot of young, healthy people into the system who might otherwise choose to forego health insurance. This in turn will make such provisions as prohibiting the denial of insurance on the basis of pre-existing conditions an acceptable cost to the system.

So, as is usually the case, Perkins' position has an iota of facial plausibility about it. He is not completely wrong. If one follows the logic of his position from start to finish, however, one finds some pretty ugly propositions. As a premise, one has to believe that all LGBT persons suffer from poor physical health, a manifestly absurd proposition. Just go to the nearest softball field and watch the game for a bevy of robustly health lesbians.

Even more revolting, however, is the implication of Perkins' position. If it were true (counterfactual conditional) that LGBT people all suffer from poor health, and then, having posited that premise, one then concludes that we should not encourage them to sign up for health insurance. The kindest conclusion is that Perkins wants all LGBT persons to continue in their illnesses. The most logical conclusion, given the historical context, is that Perkins hopes denying queers health insurance will hasten the day when we all die and leave him in peace.

Note that it is a necessary implication of Perkins' position that all us nasty, sickly queers should forego health insurance in the interest of protecting the healthcare system for all those good, upstanding Christians who follow god's dictates as interpreted by Tony Perkins.