

**PE1487/AA**

Pat Crawford Email of 1 November 2013

Attention of David Stewart MSP

I am writing to express my concerns over Religious Observance in Scottish schools. I am concerned that the current provision of Religious Observance is not inclusive to all views, and is strongly skewed in most cases towards Christianity. Given that our society is culturally and religiously diverse, and increasingly so, this is not appropriate for our children.

Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents are supposed to be given the right to withdraw their children from Religious Observance, and sufficient information to base their decision upon, but, often, this is not the case. In addition, there is supposed to be provision of a suitable alternative activity for those who opt out, so they are not disadvantaged, and this is also often not the case.

The Scottish Secular Society has petitioned the Scottish Parliament to get provision of Religious Observance changed to Opt In, so that schools would have to inform parents of what Religious Observance provision is taking place, what ideas it contains and who communicates them, and then to ask for permission for their children to attend. This petition (PE01487) is due its second hearing on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, and I request that you support it. This minimal change in the law would allow for the participation of those who do want Religious Observance in schools, for the parents of children to be fully and properly informed on this important area of their education, and for those who cannot in good conscience be involved to not compromise their Human Right to freedom of faith and conscience. It is an excellent compromise between conflicting views.

You can find the petition and its responses here:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/gettinginvolved/petitions/religiousobservance>

Please note, all the responses objecting to the petition come from Christian groups, and all those in support from other faith groups and parents who have real experience of the problems that current provision of Religious Observance causes.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Slainte!

Pat Crawford  
Helensburgh