

Ocean State Action

Fighting together for social and economic justice

January 11, 2011

Hon. Gina Raimondo, General Treasurer
State House, Room 102
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Treasurer Raimondo,

On behalf of a broad range of civil rights and community organizations, we respectfully write to you regarding your recent affiliation with the Manhattan Institute - an extremist right wing group that promotes offensive, ignorant and hurtful positions towards the LGBTQI community, women, minorities and our environment.

Last week you traveled to New York to stand with and be publicly recognized by The Manhattan Institute, where you accepted their "Urban Innovator Award" for your work to alter Rhode Island's pension system. Your work regarding the pension system has certainly been the subject of significant debate, and our purpose today is not to reexamine the merits of those legislative efforts. Rather, we seek to call your attention to a series of troubling articles and position papers that we sincerely hope do not reflect your own personal or political positions.

- In "[Gay Marriage vs American Marriage](#)", the Manhattan Institute comes alarmingly close to some of the more common anti-equality rants espoused by the so-called National Organization for Marriage (NOM) and the Family Research Council, by claiming that marriage equality (same-gender marriage) is not the same as "American Marriage". Furthermore, in "[Redefining Marriage Away](#)", the Manhattan Institute claims that the reason to fear marriage equality is that gay and lesbian couples do not value fidelity, that their asserted lack of monogamy is immoral and dangerous. As if these articles aren't offensive enough, they publish and reference anti-equality articles and [books](#) written by former NOM president Maggie Gallagher including "[Why Marriage is Good For You](#)".
- Ms. Hymowitz writes about how "[Women Prefer the Mommy Track](#)," widespread [rape on college campuses is a myth](#), and claims that [feminism as a whole is "not so much dead as obsolete."](#)
- The Manhattan Institute [called claims of racial profiling by police "ACLU misinformation," "promoting racial paranoia," and "ivory-tower posturing"](#) and

[compared being charged with racism to being charged as a witch: to be without any conceivable defense.](#)

- The Manhattan Institute [rails against President Obama's green jobs initiative](#), stands [in opposition to wind power](#), and [sees fracking as an alternative energy solution](#).

Madame Treasurer, the aforementioned articles are just a sample of what is readily available on the Manhattan Institute's website. We must ask if you or anyone in your office were aware that this organization published such venomous, racially-charged, anti-gay, anti-environment and anti-women positions before you agreed to be honored by them in New York. We are willing to accept that you were not, but that acceptance must accompany a proactive effort by you. Return the Manhattan Institute's Urban Innovator Award and publicly condemn these harmful writings at your earliest convenience, preferably within the next 48 hours.

We recognize that the purpose of your visit to the Manhattan Institute was to receive an accolade for your pension work and not to discuss the important issues we have brought to your attention. It is simply unacceptable to us as a coalition, or your constituents as a whole, for you to stand with or accept an award from a narrow-minded and hurtful organization. To do so would be seen as nothing less than an implicit condoning of their bigotry.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration, we look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Clean Water Action Rhode Island

Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island

Hope United

Marriage Equality Rhode Island

National Association of Social Workers Rhode Island Chapter

Ocean State Action

Sierra Club Rhode Island Chapter