

ernment espousing a religious focus that is as narrow-minded and as discriminatory as the one for which you are advocating. I realize that various factions in the U.S. have a history of pushing our government toward a strictly Christian identification. I take issue with this because our Constitution's First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..."

I also take issue with this because religion is sometimes used to support a variety of types of discrimination and/or violence. For instance, the Bible was used in the 1840s and 1850s to justify slavery — that is, just to be clear, used to justify buying and selling human beings and using them as property, tools and items of commerce.

I take issue with a current push toward a religious identification or alliance in our government because the Bible is now being used to justify everything from withholding information about and access to abortion and/or contraceptives, to discrimination against LGBTQ citizens, to permitting houses of worship to advocate for particular political candidates, and to "criminalizing" asylum seeker who come to the U.S. — and thus justifying separation of children from their families.

Please leave religion to the churches, the synagogues, the mosques and our own hearts. Do not use it to justify government actions, nor to identify an entire nation of people — who are far more diverse than you understand.

JULIANNA WAGGONER
West Whately

Supports Eric Nakajima for state representative

As a longtime Amherst resident and fellow Amherst Regional High School grad, Eric Nakajima and I

go way back.

Like others who grew up with Eric, I have always admired his progressive politics, work for social justice and passion for helping others. And, in my 20 years as an aide to Congressman John Olver, I was excited to witness Eric continually living out his values and helping build caring communities where everyone has a seat at the table.

From his economic development efforts with former governor Deval Patrick to his steady leadership as chairman of the Amherst School Committee, Eric approaches every challenge with both his head and his heart and knows that lasting success only comes through cooperation and partnerships.

With our western Massachusetts delegation in a state of flux, we especially need leaders with Eric's experience, talent and commitment to step forward. Eric has and I'm proud to support him for 3rd Hampshire District representative.

JON NIEDZIELSKI
Amherst

Must act against cruelty of separations at border

Children as young as infants forcibly separated from their parents and placed in tents and warehouses, families fleeing violence in their homelands being told that seeking asylum at our border is a crime, elected leaders claiming Biblical support for a barbaric policy: has it really come to this in the United States?

Let us be frank: these are atrocities.

Pediatricians to Trump administration reparable trauma young people, their parents and

Can we sit such cruelty? us harshly. Will "First they came and I did not seek seeking asylum

Sing distracte

According North I don its dozen times that promise That's not pore didn't attracted the p criminal cons campaign and North Korea t power.

LETTERS & C Gazette encour words) and gu from readers. to opinion@ga Gazette, P.O. I

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